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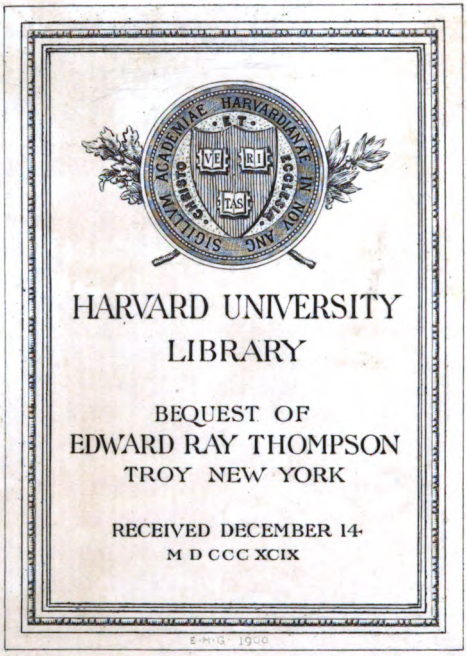

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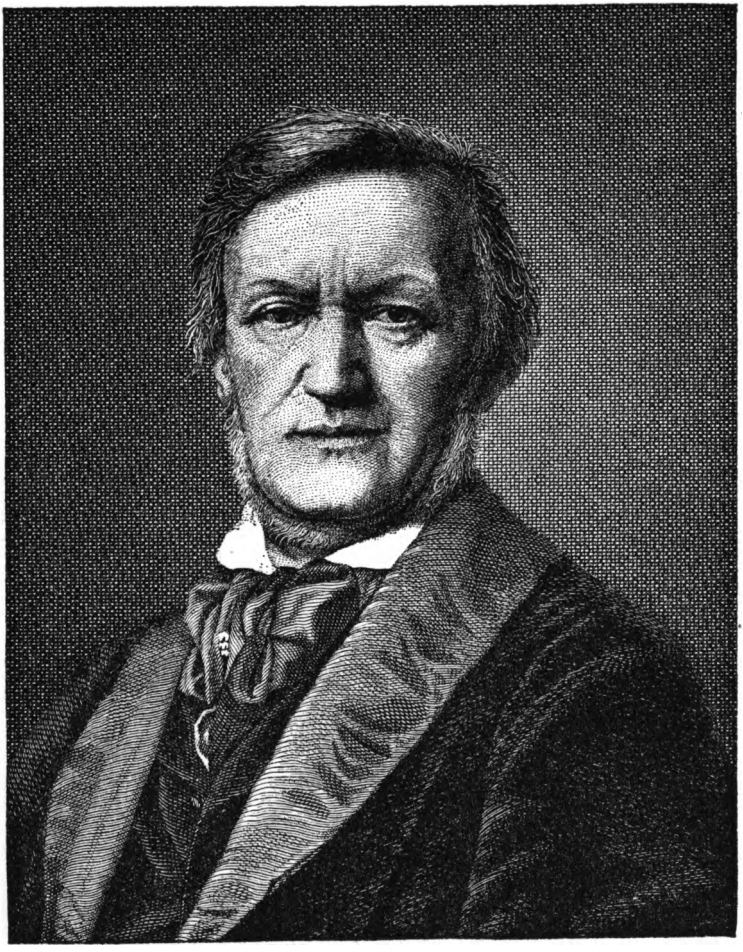

RICHARD WAGNER.

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Anal. pp. 393 & 609.

MY MUSICAL LIFE

BY THE

REV. H. R. HAWEIS, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF "MUSIC AND MORALS," ETC.,
"THOUGHTS FOR THE TIMES," "SPEECH IN SEASON," "ARROWS IN THE AIR,"
"CURRENT COIN," "POETS IN THE PULPIT," "PET," "THE AMERICAN HUMORISTS,"
"ASHES TO ASHES," "THE KEY," ETC.

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THE MUSIC OF THE FUTURE.

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Fourth Book.

THE MUSIC OF THE FUTURE.

I.

INTERLUDE

ON THE TITLE OF BOOK IV.

IT is not possible to write upon this subject—the title is out of date. The Wagnerian music of the future has become the music of the present. Such fragments of it as are intended to stand alone or can be dissevered from their dramatic surroundings, are the acknowledged plums in all our concert programmes. Every provincial band aspires to produce them. The operas which draw best at both of the great London houses are WAGNER'S operas; and the London season of 1881,

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with the Wagnerian cycle of dramas at one house and *Niebelungen Ring* at the other, succeeded in keeping almost every other opera off the boards. The noisy opponents of a few years ago remind me, with their almost inaudible groans and faint praise of the victor, of the groans of Fafner the dragon or "Wurm," and the unwilling tribute which he is forced to pay just before he expires to the prowess and might of Siegfried.

The evolution of art may be arrested, but, like that of nature, it cannot be stopped. The process is as inexorable as the fall of the leaf or the triumphant burst of spring. Some of us die in the autumn and others perish in the keener air of spring; but art leads forth her ringing choirs into the golden summer land, and the strong and young leap up at her call. Beautiful is the breaking out of fresh thought, fair is the coming of the new age. There is a wind in the trees, the murmur of waters; a fragrance streams from the East, and I seem to hear the morning stars singing together and all the sons of God shouting for joy.

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Music – Biog.
& Wagner

II.

WAGNER.

WAGNER is the most powerful personality that has appeared in the world of music since BEETHOVEN. But indeed he seems to me, in his wide range as poet, dramatist, musician, and philosopher, almost alone in the history of Art.

298. WAGNER AND BEETHOVEN.

BEETHOVEN was a musician only. His glory is to have carried the art of music to its extreme limits of development: no one has yet gone beyond him.

WAGNER said, "I have invented nothing." You cannot invent metre after the Greeks, or the modern drama after SHAKSPERE, or colouring and perspective after the Italians —there is a point at which an art ceases to grow and stands full-blown like a flower.

Most people admit that in music, as in other arts, that point has been reached. What then remained? *This*, according to RICHARD WAGNER: to concentrate into one dazzling focus all the arts, and, having sounded and developed the expressional depth, and determined the peculiar function of each, to combine them at length into one perfect and indivisible whole.

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Words seem childishly inadequate to render all at once such a conception as this. Slowly we may master some of its details and allow them to orb into a perfect whole. If you stand at the foot of one of the Alps, you can see but a little portion of it—a hamlet, a sloping patch of vineyard, and a pine copse beyond; but as you ascend the winding path the prospect opens to right and left; cascades leap by to lose themselves in the torrent below—you plunge into the gloom of a forest and emerge on to the higher meadows and pleasant scenes of pastoral life—yonder the soil grows rocky, and tumbled boulders lie around you—the cloud lifts, and a vista of mountains and valleys is suddenly opened up, and pressing forward you leave far below the murmurs of one world, and raise your enraptured eyes to the black eagle, as he wheels aloft in the golden air beyond the stainless and eternal snows.

299. UNITY OF THE ARTS.

So when we are brought face to face with such a varied, complex, and immense intelligence as that of RICHARD WAGNER we are apt to dwell on a part—a peculiarity of the music—a turn of the drama—a melody, a situation, an eccentricity. But the secret lies, after all, in the unity of effect. Close your eyes after a day in the Alps, and, as the visions pass before you, all will grow clear to your inner consciousness, and the varied scenes you have realized only in succession will at last arrange themselves into one great and majestic whole.

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"Perhaps he has some talent for music," said the sick man as he heard little RICHARD, then only seven years old, strumming a tune from *Der Freyschutz* on the piano. It was LOUIS GEYER, his step-father; painter, author, and actor, then on his death-bed, thinking of the future, planning as dying men plan, and hitting the mark as they often hit it, quite at random. The child's vivid temperament and eager, sensitive mind had always made him a favourite with the actor and the poet, and he thought of making a painter of RICHARD, but the boy seemed to have no turn for it. His mother, a woman full of life and imagination, was less anxious and more wise. She let him grow, and happily he was left to her, "with no education," as he says, "but life, art, and myself."

300. WAGNER THE BOY.

Indeed any attempt to hasten WAGNER's development, or to fix his career, would doubtless have failed. From the first, the consciousness of his own force has been one of his strangest and strongest peculiarities. At times it seems to have almost intoxicated him—at others it sustained and cheered him in utter loneliness; it has dominated all who have come in personal contact with him, and bent the minds and wills of the rebellious like reeds before the wind.

And the reason is evident. WAGNER was always prodigious in his ability. Like those very fast trotters that flash along the highways of England and America, he has been in the habit of passing everyone on the road, and passing them

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easily. But the consciousness of power bred in him a singular wilfulness. At school he could learn anything, but he would learn only as he chose and what he chose. When *his* time came he mastered, with incredible rapidity and accuracy, Greek, Latin, mythology, and ancient history. As for his music-master, he soon sent him to the right-about, telling him he would learn music his own way. Indeed the variety of influences, and the rapidity with which he absorbed them, one after the other, quite unfitted him for going into harness early in any one direction.

301. EXPRESSION.

At the age of seventeen he had dipped into most literatures, ancient and modern — glanced at science, learnt English in order to read SHAKSPERE, weighed several schools of philosophy, studied and dismissed the contending theologies, absorbed SCHILLER and worshipped GOETHE (then eighty-four years old), turned away from the conventional stage of KOTZEBUE and IFFLAND, tasted politics, and been deeply stirred by the music of BEETHOVEN.

There was doubtless a great indistinctness about his aims at this time. To live, to grow, to feel, to be filled with new emotions, and to sound his enormous capacities for receiving impressions and acquiring facts—this had hitherto been enough; but the vexed question was inevitable: to what end?

The artistic temperament could give but one answer to

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that—"EXPRESSION!" Creation itself—man—the world, the universe is nothing but that. There is ever this imperious divine necessity for outward expression. This is the lesson of the ages and of the universe—of which we see but a little speck realized upon our tiny and overcrowded planet. But this burning thought turns the mind of man itself into a divine microcosm—he, too, begins to obey in his higher activities what he perceives to be the supreme law of the divine life. He, too, must flash into self-consciousness, and breathe in form, until all that slept in the silence of his heart comes forth swift and radiant with the wind and fire of emotion, and stands at last like an angel, full of wreathed melodies and crowned with stars.

Such to the artist soul is the beloved parable of earth. The life within must become outward; all that we are is dying to be born: is craving to realize itself, to know, to possess, to adore!

It is quite obvious that life is here seized, not from the intellectual, but from the emotional side. The intellect is used to fathom, to formulate, to economize, and represent, in their most impressive forms, the feelings which would otherwise be wasted and mis-spent; but the intellect, which has played so important a part in WAGNER'S system, is always the second, never the first factor, and its function has been to analyze the various expressional media of the past and present, and to create some form or combination more exhaustive and powerful than all the rest.

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WAGNER was willing to be led; but he could not help feeling that an artist now is the heir of all the ages, that now for the first time he can stand and gauge the creations of the past in poetry, painting, drama, and music, and ask himself, how far, through these, has the inner world of the mind found utterance. WAGNER had the unconscious but inflexible hardihood to take up each art in turn, weigh it, and find it wanting. Each fell short of the whole reality in some respect. Painting leaves out motion and solidarity, sculpture possesses solidarity without motion, and usually without colour. Poetry without drama appeals to the senses chiefly through the imagination; in itself it has neither sound, colour, nor solidarity. The spoken drama lacks the intensity which it is the unique function of musical sound to give; whilst mere pantomime, whether of dance or drama, lacks the indefinite power of sound as well as the definite suggestion of words; and, lastly, musical sound alone provokes the eternal "why?" which can only be answered by associating the emotion raised with thought, for music alone is without solidarity, colour, or thought, whilst possessing motion and sound in the highest perfection.

302. THE ARTS DEFECTIVE.

It will be said, "Yes, but each art is complete in itself." True, but not complete as a means of expressing thought and feeling. You urge, "But the power of art lies often in its suggestiveness. I read a poem and shut my eyes, and

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the vision is more splendid than anything that could be presented outwardly." Yes, indirectly, because you have imagination; the vision was beautiful, but its quality depended on *you*, not on the *art*. Art is for expression, and that art is best which expresses most. Do not confuse the effects of imagination and association with the effects of art. A barrel-organ or a daub may serve to set a-going imagination and memory, but art has to do with expression, and is defective *quâ* art just where it begins to make these demands upon imagination and memory.

INDIVIDUALISM OF SHAKSPERE.

303. Those who have traced WAGNER'S career from boyhood know how patiently he has questioned every art, how passionately he has surrendered himself to it, for a time; how willing he would have been to rest, how inexorably experience and feeling have urged him on until, like the hardy navigators of old, he broke at last into a new and undiscovered ocean. At the age of eleven he had read SHAKSPERE. Surely dramatic expression of thought and feeling could go no farther. But he would test it as a form of art by experiment, and see how it worked. He immediately constructed a drama, horrible and thorough—a cross between *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. Forty-two characters suffered death in the first four acts, so that in the fifth, in order to people his stage at all, most of them had to reappear as ghosts. The Shaksperean

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method was closely adhered to, and for several years he continued to brood over it lovingly.

Here was a form intensely individual, self-conscious—in which man explored the depths of his own nature. On that rough wooden stage of the Globe Theatre so vivid were the characters, so rapid and complex the feelings, so perfect and expressive the pantomime, that the want of stage-trappings and accessories was hardly felt. Still, it was a restrained expression; it was too mosaic; the individuals lacked an universal element in which to live and move and have their being: we sit fascinated and bewildered with the subtle analysis and changing episodes; but the characters do not run up into universal types, they are too entirely absorbed by their own thoughts and feelings. The contest here is not with Fate and Time, as on the Greek stage, but with Self and Society.

Excited but oppressed by the complex inner life of the Shaksperean drama, WAGNER still felt the need of wedding the personal life to some larger ideal types, and intensifying the emotional element by the introduction of musical sound. Then the cramped wooden stage of the Globe Theatre vanished, and in its place rose the marble amphitheatre, open to the sky, embedded in the southern slope of the Athenian Acropolis. In the classical drama nothing was individual—the whole life of Greece was there, but all was summed up in large

304. THE GREEK THEATRE.

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and simple types. The actors speak through fixed masks. All fine inflexion is lost—all change of facial expression sacrificed to massive groupings and stately poses, regulated by the shrill pipe and the meagre harp. But still there is in the dramas of ÆSCHYLUS, EURIPIDES, and SOPHOCLES a breadth of expression which enables the soul to shake itself free from its accidental surroundings and enter into general sympathy with the wider life of humanity. It is this escape into the ideal which the modern self-conscious spirit most needs: this merging of discordant self in the universal harmony which drew WAGNER towards the theatre of the Greeks. There we start from the gods, the ideal representatives of human thought and emotion. Zeus is in Agamemnon, Ares in Achilles, Artemis in Iphigenia, Aphrodite in Phædra; and there is something prophetic and sublime in the spontaneous growth of these types beneath the human touch, until they transcend the gods and conquer Olympus itself. Cassandra is greater than the gods in her consciousness of injustice—Prometheus is sublime in his god-like defiance of fate—Antigone triumphs through voluntary sacrifice—it is the inexorable progress of the human conscience towards a higher Olympus, a purer deity—men come from gods, but excel the gods; then follows the inevitable decline, "the dusk of the gods," and, lastly, the assertion of man's divinity and the rehabilitation through man of the divine idea.

This thought Christianity should eternally present; but

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as its votaries unhappily trampled upon one half of human life, and caricatured the other all through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance insisted upon reviving the types of Greek beauty and force, in order to restore the balance and reassert the place and dignity of the down-trodden senses. That protest, in the teeth of our modern religious narrowness, will continue to be popular until the reconciliation between the old and the new world-spirit is reached in a higher, freer life, recognizing and making room for the development in due balance of every part of human nature. The Greek view of life may not be adequate, but it had elements which we want; and to study art we must still go to Athens. Within his limits the Greek remains our supreme standard.

305. THE SOUL OF THE GREEK DRAMA.

For what the Greek was, and for what he saw, his theatre found an almost perfect art-form. The dance or science of pantomimic motion was part of his daily education. His body was trained in the Palæstra, or gymnasium, and his life was one of constant drill to enable him to take part in the games and national festivals. The elastic tongue of HOMER had been enriched and fired by a hundred poets before the full development of the Greek drama, and hymns and songs, set to rhythmic and choral melodies of every character and variety, supplied him with ready emotional utterance upon all occasions. Add to this the profound enthusiasm which still accompanied the ancient rites, the Delphic oracles and the Eleusinian mysteries, and we have all the materials

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which were woven into one harmonious whole by ÆSCHYLUS —poet, warrior, stage manager, and religious devotee.

306. GREEK CHORUS.

The soul of the Greek drama, freed from accidental associations, must now be melted down in the new crucible. WAGNER found there an intense earnestness of purpose—the devout portrayal of a few fundamental types—the large clear outline like the frieze of the Parthenon—a simple plot and well-developed phases of feeling as pronounced and trenchant as the rhythmic motions of the *dramatis personæ*; and lastly he found—what he found not in SHAKSPERE—the Greek chorus. This gave its binding intensity to the whole drama—this provided the universal element in which the actors lived and moved and had their being. The chorus ever in motion—a band of youths or maidens, priests or supernatural beings, fluid and expressive, like the emotions of the vast and earnest assembly;—the chorus bore aloft a wail over the agonies of Philoctetes—a plaint for Iphigenia —a questioning of the gods for Cassandra; it enveloped the stage with floods of passionate declamation; it rushed, it pointed, it swayed, it sighed and whispered in broken pathetic accents; it was like the sobbing of the sea on a rocky strand—the sound of the waves in Ionian caves—the wild sweep of the tempest answering back man's passionate plaint, and fitting the simple feelings of the great types on the stage with an almost elemental intensity of expression. The

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mysterious variety of Greek metres, the varied spasmodic rhythms, can only be understood when the vision of the Greek chorus rises before us in its eager bursts of appropriate but fitful activity. That changing chant, that harsh ringing progression of notes on the Greek scales of which Gregorians are still the Christian relics—we should not call it music, it was not melody, much less harmony, but it was sound inflexions marvellously used to drill declamation, posture, and pantomime. The soul of it has transmigrated in these latter days—it has become the Wagnerian orchestra.

Turn back now, for a moment, to the Shaksperean drama. Chorus, musical sound, band, song, all the voices of universal nature environing man—appalling, consoling, inspiring him—have vanished. A new inner-world, unknown to the Greeks, has taken their place, and man is absorbed with himself. Yet without that universal voice which he can make his own, how he shrinks, dwarfed by his narrow individuality; no longer a part of the great whole and soul of things; nature no longer his mother, the winds no more his friends, the sea no more his comforter! The ideal atmosphere of the Greek chorus is missed; the power of music, however rudimentary, is absent; SHAKSPERE seems to have felt it; it passes over his sublime creations as an invocation to Music in *Twelfth Night*, or in Ophelia's

307. THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE UNIVERSAL.

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plaintive song. And this is the point of contact between the old drama of ÆSCHYLUS and the new drama of SHAKSPERE; the two stand for ever for the opposite poles of dramatic art—the universal type, the individual life—and both are necessary. The individual is naturally evolved from the universal, but once evolved and developed it must be restored to the universal and be glorified by it.

308. UNION OF THE ARTS.

At this crisis, in his quest after a perfect art-form, WAGNER found himself confronted with BEETHOVEN'S music. He did not believe that drama could be carried farther than ÆSCHYLUS, SOPHOCLES, and SHAKSPERE, or music any farther than BEETHOVEN; but he did conceive the project of leading the whole stream of the Beethovenian music into the channels of Shaksperean drama. The Greek chorus might have been inadequate to the simple types of Greek tragedy, but modern life, with its self-conscious spirituality, its questions, its doubts, its hopes, and its immense aspirations—this seemed to require quite a new element of expression. The voice of this inner life had been preparing for four hundred years; when it was ready it turned out to be no inflexible mask, through which a human voice might speak, nor even a mobile chorus, but a splendid and complex organ of expression, fitted so closely about the soul of man, as to become the very Æolian harp upon which the breath of his life could freely play.

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In the great world-laboratory of Art, Wagner found already all that he required. There was, as he remarked, nothing left for him to invent; the arts of poetry, music, painting, and pantomime had been explored separately and perfected; nay, one step more had been made—the arts had actually been *combined* at different times in different ways. Music with pantomime and poem by the Greeks; music with pantomime, drama, painting, and every conceivable effect of stage scenery and costume, as in modern opera; music and words, as in oratorio or the cantata. But in Greece music was wholly undeveloped as an art; acting had never sounded the depths of individual life and expression. The Shaksperean drama left out music. The cantata and oratorio omitted pantomime and painting; whilst modern opera presented a meretricious and maimed combination of the arts resulting from a radically defective form.

With a surprising vigour of intellect, WAGNER has analysed the situation, and explained exactly why he felt dissatisfied with the best operatic efforts of the past, and why he seeks to supersede opera with the "musical drama."

I think his critical results may be briefly summed up thus:—In the musical drama, poetry, music, scenery, and acting are to be so blended as that each shall have its own appropriate share, and no more, as a medium of expression. The acting must not be cramped by the music, as in common opera, where

309. WAGNER'S THEORY SUMMED UP.

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a man has to stand on one toe till he has done his *roulade*, or pauses in the dead of night to shout out a song about "Hush! we shall be discovered!" when there is not a moment to spare. The music must not be spoiled for the acting, as in ballet and pantomime, where acting is overstrained to express what the sister arts of poetry and music are better fitted to convey. And poetry, which after all supplies the definite basis and answers the inevitable "why?" must not be sacrificed, as in our opera *libretti*, to the demands of singers for *aria* and *scena*, whilst the scenery must only attempt effects and situations which can be made to look real. The object of the grand musical drama is, in fact, to present a true picture of human feeling with the utmost fulness and intensity, freed from every conventional expression by the happy union of all the arts, giving to each only what it is able to deal with—but thus dealing with everything, leaving nothing to the imagination. The WAGNERIAN drama completely exhausts the situation.

310. ITALIAN OPERA ANALYSED.

Filled with this magnificent conception, WAGNER looked out upon the world of modern opera—and what did he see? First, he noticed that the opera had made a false start. It sprang, not from the earnest feeling of the miracle plays, but from the indolent desire of the luxurious Italian nobles to listen to the delicious popular melodies in a refined form. The

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spontaneous street action (which may to this day be admired in Naples or Florence) was exchanged for a sort of drawing-room stage and poets were hired to re-set the Italian melodies, as MOORE re-set the Irish melodies, for ears polite. This new aristocratic mongrel art had nothing to do with the real drama. METASTASIO himself was only an Italian MR. CHORLEY—the very humble servant of everybody's tunes; but these tunes had to be strung together, so the *recitative,* used for centuries in church, was borrowed; then the product was naturally a little dull, so the whole had to be whipped up with a dance; hence the *ballet,* and there you have the three fixed points of the opera—*aria, recitative,* and *ballet*—which to this day determine the form of modern opera. Thus opera, whilst it had no connection with the real drama, did not even spring from the best musical elements. "From the prosperity of opera in Italy," says WAGNER, "the art-student will date the decline of music in that country. . . . . No one who has any conception of the grandeur and ineffable depth of the earlier Italian church music—PALESTRINA's 'Stabat Mater,' for instance—will ever dream of maintaining that Italian opera can be looked upon as the legitimate daughter of that wondrous mother."*

As ear-tickling, and not truth of expression, was the chief thing, and as there was nothing much to be expressed,

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* *Music of the Future*: Letter to F. Villot, p. 10.

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the *arias* got wider and wider of the words, and at last the words became mere pegs, and the music totally irrelevant—as who should dance a jig over a grave.

GLUCK'S reform consisted in making the operatic tunes once more true to the words; but the improvement touched

311. the sentiment only, without reaching the defective form. In France the form was slightly redeemed by the superior *libretti* and more elaborate pantomime; whilst in Germany opera arrived as a finished foreign production, and MOZART and others had to go to Italy to learn it. "In expressing my highest admiration of the exquisite beauty of our great masters," says WAGNER, "I did not detract from their fame in showing that the cause of their weaknesses lay in the faultiness of the *genre*." * And the defect of *genre* lay chiefly in the immolation of the *libretto* to the exigences of fixed *aria, scena,* and *recitative*. The drama, which has to be stretched upon that Procrustean bed, must necessarily become disjointed and lifeless in the process. ROSSINI retarded the progress of the musical drama for at least fifty years through the absolute triumph of melody, in the most fascinating abundance, over the resources of the orchestra and the inspirations of the poet.

GLUCK AND THE INCORRIGIBLE OPERA.

"His opera," writes EDWARD DANNREUTHER, to whose

* Ibid, p. 22.

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pamphlet on WAGNER I am so much indebted, "is like a string of beads, each bead being a glittering and intoxicating tune. Dramatic and poetic truth—all that makes a stage performance interesting—is sacrificed to tunes. Poet and musician alike had felt this. GOETHE and SCHILLER both found the operatic form, and even the existing stage, so uncongenial, that they took to writing narrative and descriptive plays not to be acted at all, and have been followed in this by BYRON, TENNYSON, BROWNING, and SWINBURNE. BEETHOVEN wrote but one opera, *Fidelio*, in which the breadth of the overture, or overtures, seems to accuse the narrowness of the dramatic form, although the *libretto* of *Fidelio* is very good, as times go. MENDELSSOHN and SCHUMANN could never find a suitable *libretto*.

312. THE MUSICAL DRAMA.

The conclusion of all this is obvious. The perfect medium which was to combine the apparently unmanageable arts was yet to come, and WAGNER proposed to himself the task of harnessing these fiery steeds to his triumphal car, and driving them all together. He must choose his own subject, with a simple plot and a few strong passions and great situations. He must write his own drama, which, without being either orthodox verse or fixed metre, would aim in its mobile and alliterative pathos at following the varied inflexions of natural feeling. He must arrange his own scenery, perfect in detail, and within the limits of stage possibility; and finally he must

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compose his own music and drill his band, chorus, and characters.

To his prophetic vision the old opera form of *aria, scena,* and *recitative* has disappeared. The orchestra in a wondrous fashion floods the soul with an emotion appropriate to the situation. The drama itself advances unshackled by any musical exigency; the music flows on continuously, not imposing a form, but taking its form from the emotion of the sentences as they follow each other. Snatches there are here and there of exquisite melody, broken up by part-singing, with a wild burst of chorus when needful to fulfil the dramatic occasion; but never must action be delayed, never must emotion be belied, never truth sacrificed: only at times, when the expressional power of words ceases, the music will fulfil, deepen, combine, and sometimes lift the drama almost out of itself. Then the spectator is raised into a sphere of ecstatic contemplation; the pageantry passes before his eyes as in a dream, whilst his soul lives and moves only in the ideal sphere of the varied and intense passions which are being played out before him.

313. WAGNER'S MASTERS.

Whilst these perceptions and aims were slowly maturing in him, WAGNER found himself constantly at war with his age and his surroundings. At sixteen, he had resolved to devote himself to music, finding in it the ineffable expression for emotions otherwise mainly inexpressible. Musical notes and intervals were to

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him radiant forms and flaming ministers. MOZART taught him that exquisite certainty of touch which selects exactly the right notes to express a given musical idea. WEBER taught him the secret of pure melody, how to stamp with an indelible type a given character, as in the return of the Samiel motive in *Der Freyschutz*; he also perceived in that opera the superiority of legend and popular myth, as on the Greek stage, to present the universal and eternal aspects of human life in their most pronounced and ideal forms. BEETHOVEN supplied him with the mighty orchestra, capable of holding in suspension an immense crowd of emotions, and of manipulating the interior and complex feelings with the instantaneous and infallible power of a magician's wand. SCHUBERT taught him the freedom of song—CHOPIN the magic elasticity of chords—SPOHR the subtle properties of the chromatic scale—and even MEYERBEER revealed to him the possibility of stage effect through the Grand Opera. SHAKSPERE, GOETHE, and SCHILLER suggested the kind of language in which such dramas as *Lohengrin* and *Rheingold* might be written; whilst MADAME SCHRÖDER DEVRIENT revealed to him what a woman might accomplish in the stage presentation of ideal passion with such a part as Elsa in *Lohengrin*, or Brünnhilde in *Walküre*.

But the immediate result of this, as I have said, was not promising. Contrary to the advice of his friends, he had thrown himself, heart and soul, into the study of music as a

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profession. Under the Cantor Weinlig, at Leipsic, and whilst at the University, he produced an overture and symphony, which were played, and not unfavourably received, at the Gewandhaus; but his early work, with here and there an exceptional trait in harmony, was nothing but a pale copy of MOZART, as may be seen from a poor little piano sonata lately republished by BREITKOPF.

His health now broke down. He was twenty years old (1833), and he went to his brother, a professor of music at Wurzburg, where he stayed a year, at the end of which time he was appointed musical director at the Magdeburg theatre, where, under the combined influence of WEBER and BEETHOVEN, he produced two operas—*The Fairies*, and *The Novice of Palermo*—neither of which succeeded. He left his place in disgust, and obtained another post at the Königsberg theatre. There he married an actress—a good creature, who, without being much to blame, does not seem to have materially increased his happiness, but who decidedly shared the opinion of his friends that the composition of "pot-boilers" was superior to the pursuit of the Ideal. The Ideal, however, haunted WAGNER, and—Poverty.

314. WAGNER AT TWENTY.

In 1836 he left with MINA for Riga on the shores of the Baltic, and there, as *chef d'orchestre* at the theatre, he

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really appears to have enjoyed studying the operas of MEHUL, SPONTINI, AUBER; for, whilst suffering what he describes as a dull, gnawing pain at the frequent irrelevance of the sentiment to the music, the nobler correspondences and beautiful inspirations gave him far-off glimpses of that musical drama to which he even now dimly aspired.

315. RIENZI.

In the midst of his routine duties BULWER'S novel, *Rienzi*, struck his imagination. There, as on a large and classic stage, was portrayed that eternal revolt of the human spirit against tyranny, routine, selfishness, and corruption, of which the Polish insurrection of 1831 and the Revolution of July were the modern echoes. Rienzi, a tribune of the people, dreaming of the old austere Republic, in the midst of corrupt Papal Rome—a noble heart, a powerful will at war with a brutal and vulgar age, supported, cheered by the enthusiasm of a devoted and patriotic sister—raised by a wave of popularity to the highest summit of human power, then hurled down by the Papal anathema, betrayed by a mean and cowering aristocracy, banished by the mob that had so lately hailed him as a deliverer, and at last falling by a treacherous hand upon the charred and crumbling ashes of his own homestead, the last great tribune of Rome!—here was a subject with immense outlines, full of situations in which the greatest breadth might be joined to the most detailed inflexions of feeling. In it WAGNER, whilst not departing avowedly from the form of

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the grand opera then in vogue at Paris, has in fact burst the boundaries. *Rienzi* is already the work of an independent master—it is, at least, prophetic of *Lohengrin* and *Tristan*, whilst comparing favourably in pure melody and sensational effects with any of the current operas. What rush, triumph, aspiration about the large outlines and tramping measures of the overture—what *élan* and rugged dignity in the choruses—what elevation in Rienzi's prayer, "God of Light!"—what fervour and inexhaustible faith in the phrase, "Thou hast placed me as a pilot on a treacherous and rocky strand"—what imagery, as of vast buildings and ranged towers dimly seen athwart the dull red dawn, in the music of "Scatter the night that reigns above this city," and what chastened exaltation, free from all Italian flourish or ornament, of "Rise, thou blessed sun, and bring with thee resplendent liberty!"

But in 1839, which saw the text and the completion of the two first acts, we are far indeed from the production of *Rienzi*; it struck, however, the key-note of a most important and little-understood phase in WAGNER'S career—the political phase.

316. WAGNER MOB ORATOR.

Musicians, poets, and artists are not, as a rule, politicians. Their world is the inner world—the world of emotion and thought, which belongs to no special age or clime, but is eternal and universal. GOETHE and BEETHOVEN cared little for revolutions,

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and have even been deemed wanting in patriotism. But WAGNER was a hot politician. He was at one time a mob orator, and was seduced by his illustrious friend RÖCKEL, who was afterwards put in prison, to throw himself at Dresden into the rise of Saxony and the agitations of 1848. He was proscribed and banished from German soil, and years afterwards when he had, if not recanted, at all events acquiesced in things as they were, he was obliged to fly from Munich, warned by the friendly king that his life was in danger. The title of but one of his numerous semi-political pamphlets, *Art and the Revolution*, gives us the real clue to all this. People have accused WAGNER of time-serving and change in politics, but the fact was that he favoured social revolution *because* he thought it needful to art revolution. Conventionality and stagnation in art seemed to him the natural outcome of conventionality and stagnation in society; the world must be recalled to feeling and reality before art could again become the ideal life of the people, as it was once in Greece. But when, through royal patronage later on, all impediment to the free development of his art-work disappeared, his revolutionary tendencies also disappeared. He, too, was, first and foremost, Artist, and he came to realise his vocation, which had to do with Art, and with "the Revolution" only in so far as it affected "Art."

But, in fact, no ardent soul could escape the romantic

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and revolutionary contagion that swept over France, Ger-

317. THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT.

many, and even England, between 1830 and 1850. Europe seemed to breathe freely once more after the iron hand of NAPOLEON I. had been lifted from her oppressed bosom—but then, like a wayward child, she burst into all kinds of excesses.

The atheism of the first revolution, the brutality of NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE'S administration, the dulness of LOUIS PHILIPPE'S, the revived taste for Greek art combined with the inflexible dogmatism of the Papal creed—all these conspired to fill the ardent youth of the period with a deep revolt against things as they were. With this came a settled longing for a return of some sort to nature and freedom, and a vague but intense aspiration towards the ideal and immaterial world, which in other times might have taken the form of a religious revolution, but in 1830 broke out in what has been called "Romanticism" in Art. It was seen in the writings of MAZZINI and the mutterings of Italian freedom; in the insatiable and varied developments of MADAME SAND'S genius, in the wild and pathetic cries of ALFRED DE MUSSET, in the sentimentalism of LAMARTINE, in the vast scorn and bitter invective of HUGO, in the heart-broken submission of LACORDAIRE, and in the despair of DE LAMMENAIS. BYRON, SHELLEY, and TENNYSON caught both the most earthly and the most heavenly echoes of the romantic movement in England; whilst its inner life and genius have found, after all, their most subtle

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expression in the music of BEETHOVEN, MENDELSSOHN, SCHUMANN, BERLIOZ, CHOPIN, WAGNER, LISZT, and RUBINSTEIN.

"It seems, indeed," writes WAGNER, in one of those veins of flashing perception in which he so abounds, "that human sentiment, as if intensified by the pressure of conventional civilization, had sought an outlet for asserting itself according to its own laws of expression. The astounding popularity of music in our time proves the correctness of the supposition that the modern development of this art has met an innate desire of the human spirit."*

WAGNER had left Magdeburg for Riga, but he soon came to the end of his tether there. A stupid little provincial town was not likely to become then what WAGNER has made Bayreuth since—the stage for turning upside down the art-theories of the civilized world. Pushed by what he calls "despair," without money and without friends, but with that settled faith in himself which has made him independent of both until it has won both, the obscure *chef d'orchestre* resolved to go to Paris and storm the Grand Opera, then at the feet of ROSSINI and that strange, unscrupulous bric-à-brac composer, MEYERBEER! The small vessel in which he sailed was blown about the Baltic for three weeks, put into many desolate coast-nooks, and nearly wrecked. After many hardships, shared with the rough and often starving

318. WAGNER'S LOST MS.

* Letter to Villot, p. 80.

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crew, the lonely musician arrived in London (1840), with his head full of Paris and the *Grand Opéra,* and with *Rienzi* in his carpet bag.

Whilst here he playfully seized the musical *motive* of the English people. It lay, he said, in the five consecutive ascending notes (after the first three) of "Rule Britannia": there was expressed the whole breadth and downright bluff "go" of the British nation. He threw "Rule Britannia" into an overture, and sent it by post to SIR GEORGE SMART, then omnipotent musical professor in London; but the postage being insufficient, the MS. was not taken in, and at this moment is probably lying in some dim archive of the Post Office, "left till called for."

Crossing to Dieppe, he met the crafty and clever MEYERBEER, who instantly saw the man he had to deal with, and probably conceived in a moment that policy of apparent support but probable intrigue which made him throughout life WAGNER'S pet aversion.

319. WAGNER AND MEYERBEER.

It has been unwarrantably asserted that WAGNER hated the Jews because of MEYERBEER and MENDELSSOHN, and hated MEYERBEER and MENDELSSOHN because they were successful; but WAGNER'S dearest friends have been Jews; he only objected to what he considered the low level of their art theories; and if he hated MEYERBEER and MENDELSSOHN—two men also at loggerheads, by the way—it was not simply

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because they had the ear of Europe, but because they and their friends kept everyone else out of the field, whilst MEYERBEER debased musical art to the level of the vulgarest sensation, and MENDELSSOHN never rose in WAGNER'S opinion above the plane of a drawing-room prophet, whilst creating an elegant and pseudo-classic standard of excellence to which everyone soon learned to bow down.

In this opinion I shall never concur. MENDELSSOHN has been to me as much a revelator of the beautiful as WAGNER has been of the sublime. Nothing is more painful to me than the bitter opposition between the friends of MENDELSSOHN and WAGNER. These two great spirits were probably as antipathetic as MOORE and WORDSWOTH; but although WAGNER is *the* inexorable and colossal development in art since BEETHOVEN, MENDELSSOHN reigns for ever in a sweet wayside temple of his own, full of bright dreams and visions, incense and ringing songs. And partly is he so sweet because, unburthened with any sense of a message to utter, a mission to develop, he sings like a child in the valleys of asphodel, weaving bright chaplets of spring flowers for the whole world, looking upon the mystery of grief and pain with wide eyes of sympathy, and at last succumbing to it himself, but not understanding it, with a song of tender surprise upon his lips.

WAGNER passed two terrible years, 1840–42, in Paris. MEYERBEER had given him introductions, and introduced

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320. WAGNER IN PARIS.

him later to M. JOLY, a stage-director at Paris, whom he must have known to be on the point of bankruptcy, and who suspended the rehearsal of the *Novice of Palermo* at the last moment. But this was but the end of a series of checks. He wrote an overture to *Faust*. His good friend and faithful ally, SCHLESINGER, editor of the *Gazette Musicale*, got it rehearsed at the Conservatoire. It sounded quite too strange and *bizarre* to those ears polite, and was instantly snuffed out.

He submitted a *libretto*, "Love Forbidden," to a theatrical manager, but it had not a chance, and dropped. SCHLESINGER now employed him to write, and he wrote articles and novels, and so kept body and soul together. No one would listen to his music, but he was not a bad hack, and was hired for a few francs to arrange Halévy's "Queen of Cyprus" for the piano, and the latest tunes of DONIZETTI and BELLINI for piano and *cornet à piston*.

At night he stole into the Grand Opera, and there, as he tells us, felt quite certain that his own works would one day supersede the popular efforts of ROSSINI and MEYERBEER. He does not seem to have been dejected like a lesser soul; in what the French called his *immense orgueil*, he was sorry for their want of appreciation, but never dreamed of altering *his* ideas to suit them. "Je me flattais," says the unpaid musical hack, "d'imposer les miennes." Meanwhile the splendid band of the Conservatoire, under HABENECK, consoled him, and on the Boulevards he often met and chatted

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with AUBER, for whom he had a sincere respect and admiration. AUBER was at least a conscientious musician of genius, who knew his business, and did not debase what was at no time a very exalted but still a legitimate branch of his art, the *opéra comique;* and, besides, AUBER was a *bon comarade,* and liked WAGNER, probably without understanding him.

After months of drudgery, and chiefly penny-a-lining for the *Gazette Musicale,* WAGNER felt the imperious necessity for a return to his own art. He took a little cottage outside Paris, hired a piano, and shut himself up. He had done for a time, at least, with the mean, frivolous, coarse world of Paris—he did not miss his friends, he did not mind his poverty. He was again on the wild Norwegian coast, beaten about with storms, and listening to the weird tales of mariners, as in broken and abrupt utterances, or with bated breath, they confided to him the legend common in one form or other to sea-faring folk in all parts of the world—the legend of the Flying Dutchman. The tale sprang from the lives and adventures of those daring navigators of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and reflects the desperate struggle with the elements, the insatiable thirst for the discovery of new lands athwart unknown seas; and it seems to embody for ever the avenging vision of men who, resolved to win, had so often dared and lost all. A famous captain, mad to double the Cape of Storms, beaten back again and again,

321. THE FLYING DUTCHMAN, 1841.

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at length swears a mighty oath to persevere throughout eternity. The devil takes him at his word. The captain doubles the Cape, but is doomed to roam the seas for ever from pole to pole—as the Wandering Jew to tread the earth—his phantom vessel the terror of all mariners, and the dreadful herald of shipwreck. Here was a legend which needed but one inspired touch of love to make it a grand epitome of sea-faring life, with its hard toils, its forlorn hopes, and its tender and ineffably sweet respites. The accursed doom of the Flying Dutchman can be lifted by human love alone. The captain, driven by an irrepressible longing for rest, may land once in seven years, and if he can find a woman who will promise to be his and remain faithful to him for one term of seven years, his trial will be over—he will be saved.

The legend thus humanized becomes the vehicle for the expression of those intense yet simple feelings and situations which popular myth, according to WAGNER, has the property of condensing into universal types. Immense unhappiness, drawn by magnetic attraction to immense love, tried by heartrending doubt and uncertainty, and crowned with fidelity and triumphant love, the whole embodied in a clear, simple story, summed up in a few situations of terrible strength and inexorable truth,—such is WAGNER's conception of the drama of the *Flying Dutchman* with its "damnation" motive belonging to the captain, and its "salvation" motive given to the bride—its sailor's subject—its pilot's

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song—its spinning-wheel home-melody—and its stormy "Ho! e ho!" chorus. The whole drama is shadowed forth in the magic and tempestuous overture, and stands out as this composer's first straightforward desertion of history proper, and adoption of myth as the special medium of the new Musical Drama.

Six weeks of ceaseless labour, which to WAGNER were weeks of spontaneous and joyful production, sufficed to complete the music of the *Flying Dutchman*. The immediate result in Paris was ludicrous. The music was instantly judged to be absurd, and WAGNER was forced to sell the *libretto*, which was handed over to a Frenchman, one M. P. FOUCHÉ, who *could* write music. It appeared, with that gentleman's approved setting, under the title of *Le Vaisseau Fantôme*.

This was enough! No lower depth could well be reached, and WAGNER was preparing to leave Paris to the tender mercies of ROSSINI, MEYERBEER, and M. P. FOUCHÉ, when news reached him from Germany that *Rienzi*, flouted in the capital of taste, had been accepted in Berlin and Dresden!

It was the spring of 1842, and it was also the rapid and wondrous turn of the tide for WAGNER. He hurried to Dresden, to find the rehearsals of *Rienzi* already advanced. The opera was produced with that singular burst of enthusiasm which greets the first appreciation of an important but long-neglected truth,

322. FIRST SUCCESS, RIENZI, 1842.

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and WAGNER, having become the favourite of the Crown Prince, was elected Kapellmeister at Dresden, and found himself for the first time famous. Some might now have rested on their laurels, but to WAGNER's imperious development *Rienzi* was already a thing of the past. He had drunk of the crystalline waters of popular myth, and was still thirsty. The *Flying Dutchman* had opened up a new world to him, more real because more exhaustive of human feelings and character than the imperfect types and broken episodes of real history. He seemed to stand where the fresh springs of inspiration welled up from a virgin soil; he listened to the child-like voices of primitive peoples, inspired from the simple heart of Nature, and babbling eternal verities without knowing it. Legend was the rough ore—the plastic element he could seize and remould, as ÆSCHYLUS remoulded Prometheus, or SOPHOCLES Œdipus, adding philosophic analysis and the rich adornments of poetic fancy and artistic form.

The legend of *Tannhäuser* now engrossed him. The drama was soon conceived and written. There he summed up, in a few glowing scenes, the opposition between that burst of free sensuous life at the Renaissance, and the hard, narrow ideal of Papal Christianity. Christ not only crowned with thorns, but turned into stone, is all the answer that Christianity had to give to that stormy impulse which at last poured its

323. TANNHÄUSER, 1845.

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long pent-up torrent over Europe. The deep revolt still stares us in the face from the Italian canvases, as we look at the sensuous figures of RAPHAEL or TITIAN—the free types of fair breathing life, surrounded with the hard aureole of the artificial saint, or limned as in mockery, like the dreams of a pagan world upon the walls of the Vatican.

Tannhäuser, a Thuringian knight, taking refuge with Venus, no longer the beneficent Holda, joy of gods and men, but turned by the excesses of the ascetic spirit into a malign witch, and banished to the bowels of the earth in the Venusberg—Tannhäuser, with a touch eternally true to nature, bursting the fetters of an unruly sensual life, and sighing for a healthier activity—Tannhäuser seeing for a moment only, in the pure love of woman, the reconciliation of the senses with the spirit, a reconciliation made for ever impossible by the stupid bigotry of a false form of religion, but which is ultimately sealed and accomplished by love and death in heaven;—this is the human and sublime parable of the drama, wrought out with the fervour of a religious devotee, and epitomized in that prodigious overture wherein the dirge of the Church mingles with the free and impassioned song of the minstrel knight, and clashes wildly with the voluptuous echoes of the fatal Venusberg.

WAGNER'S progress was now checked by that storm of invective which burst out all over the art world of Germany —not on account of *Rienzi*, but in consequence of the

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Flying Dutchman, and especially of *Tannhäuser*. The reason is simple. The power of *Rienzi*, the audacity of its sentiment, the simplicity of its outline, and the realism of its *mise en scène*, together with a general respect for the old opera forms, ensured it a hearing which resulted in a legitimate triumph. But in *Tannhäuser* the new path was already struck out, which singers, band, audience, critics, and composers, in a body, refused to tread—in short, *aria*, *recitative*, and *ballet* were dethroned, and suddenly found themselves servants where they had been masters.

In 1843, the *Flying Dutchman* was produced at Dresden, and failed. *Rienzi* was still revived with success. WAGNER now sent the *Dutchman* and *Tannhäuser* to various theatres. The former was tried at Berlin in 1844, and failed. SPOHR had the intelligence to take it up at Cassel, and wrote a friendly and appreciative letter to WAGNER; but the MS. scores were, as a rule, returned by the other theatres, and the new operas seemed to react on the earlier success, for at Hamburgh *Rienzi* failed.

324. FAILURES.

Meanwhile, failure, together with the close sympathy of a few devoted friends, convincing him that he was more right than ever, WAGNER now threw himself into the completion of that work which is perhaps of the whole his most perfect, as it certainly is his

325. LOHENGRIN, 1847.

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most popular creation, *Lohengrin*. The superb acting and singing of Mdlles. Titiens, Nilsson, and Albani, will be fresh in the minds of many readers. The choruses in England have never yet been up to the mark, but the band under Sir Michael Costa, at its best, rendered the wondrous prelude to perfection.

The whole of *Lohengrin* is in that prelude. The descent of the Knight of the Swan from the jasper shrines of the sacred palace of Montsalvat, hidden away in a distant forest land—his holy mission to rescue Elsa from her false accusers—his high and chivalric love—his dignified trouble at being urged by her to reveal his name, that insatiable feminine curiosity which wrecks the whole—the darker scenes of treachery by which Elsa is goaded on to press her fatal inquiry—the magnificent climax of the first act—the sense of weird mystery that hangs about the appearance and re-appearance of the swan, and the final departure of the glittering Knight of the Sangraal—allegory of heavenly devotion stooping to lift up human love and dashed with earth's bitterness in the attempt;—to those who understand the pathos, delicacy, and full intensity of the *Lohengrin* prelude, this and more will become as vivid as art and emotion can make it. *Lohengrin* in its elevation, alike in its pain, its sacrifice, and its peace, is the necessary reaction from that wreck of sensual passion and religious despair so vividly grasped in the scenes of the Venusberg, in the pilgrim chant and the wayside crucifix of *Tannhäuser*.

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Lohengrin was finished in 1847, but the political events of the next few years brought WAGNER'S career in Germany to an abrupt conclusion. His growing dissatisfaction with society coincided, unconsciously no doubt, with the failure of his operas after that first dawn of success. He now devoted himself to criticism and politics. He read SCHOPENHAUER, whose pessimist philosophy did not tend to soothe his perturbed spirit; and during the next ten years, from 1847 to 1857, he spoke to the world from different places of exile in that series of political and æsthetical pamphlets to which I have before alluded.

326. NEGLECT AND EXILE, 1847–57.

In 1855, owing to the earnest advocacy of such friends as M. FERDINAND PRAEGER, who for thirty years, through evil report and good report, had never ceased to support WAGNER, the Philharmonic Society invited him over to London, and whilst here he conducted eight concerts. He was not popular; he was surprised to find that the band thought it unnecessary to rehearse, and the band was surprised that he should require so much rehearsal. But he drove the band in spite of itself, and the band hated him. They said he murdered BEETHOVEN with his *bâton*, because of the freedom and inspiration of his readings. MENDELSSOHN'S Scotch symphony had been deliberately crushed—or it was the only thing that went—according to which paper you happened to read. He did not care for the press, and he

327. LONDON, 1855.

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was not much surprised that the press did not care for him. The unfailing musical intelligence of the Queen and Prince Albert was the one ray of sunlight in this his second visit to our inhospitable land, but the power of the man could not be hid, even from his enemies; his culture astonished the half-educated musicians by whom he was surrounded, his brilliant originality impressed even his own friends, who saw him struggling through an imperfect acquaintance with French and English to make himself understood. One evening, alone in company with M. SAINTON, HECTOR BERLIOZ, and FERDINAND PRAEGER, WAGNER surprised them all by suddenly launching out on art, music, and philosophy. BERLIOZ was an elegant speaker, accustomed to lead easily, but WAGNER, with his torrent of broken French and his rush of molten ideas, silenced, bewildered, delighted, and astonished them all. BERLIOZ is gone, but that night still lives in the memory of those who were present who survive, and from whose lips I have the incident.

Thus WAGNER passed through England for a second time, leaving behind him a vague impression of power and eccentricity, the first of which the musical press did its best to kill, whilst fanning the second into a devouring flame which swallowed up WAGNER's reputation. Notwithstanding the exertions of a few devoted believers, twenty-one years flitted by, and little enough was heard of RICHARD WAGNER in this country until, owing to the increasing agitation of a younger school of musicians, foremost among whom we

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must name MR. EDWARD DANNREUTHER and MR. WALTER BACHE, the *Flying Dutchman* was at last indifferently produced at Covent Garden. I well remember the occasion. ILMA DI MURSKA played Senta admirably well, though too old for the part; and, notwithstanding the efforts of MR. SANTLEY, the recitative music was nearly unintelligible, owing to want of intelligence on the part of the band. The whole thing was clumsily put on the stage, and Senta's solos and the choruses alone pleased.

328. VON BÜLOW'S INFLUENCE, 1874.

In 1874 HER HANS VON BULOW, pupil of LISZT and great exponent of WAGNER's music, came over, and by his wonderful playing, aided steadily by the periodical WAGNERIAN and LISZT concerts given by MESSRS. DANNREUTHER and BACHE, at which BÜLOW conducted WAGNER's music, brought about the rise of the new WAGNER movement in England, which received its development in the interest occasioned by the Bayreuth Festival, and reached its climax in the WAGNER Festival actively promoted by HERR WILHELMJ, and undertaken by MESSRS. HODGES and ESSEX, in 1877, at the Albert Hall.

329. CIPRIANI POTTER ON WAGNER.

MINA, WAGNER's first wife, was now dead. I cannot here tell at length how LISZT (whose daughter, COSIMA VON BÜLOW, became WAGNER's second wife in 1870) laboured at Weimar with untiring zeal to produce WAGNER's works, and how his efforts were

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at last crowned with success all over Germany in 1849–50. It was a popular triumph. I remember old CIPRIANI POTTER, the friend of BEETHOVEN, saying to me at the time when the English papers teemed with the usual twaddle about WAGNER'S music being intelligible only to the few, "It is all very well to talk this stuff here, but in Germany it is the people, the common people, who crowd to the theatre when *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* are given." I have noticed the same at the Covent Garden concerts; it was always the pit and gallery who called for the WAGNER nights, whilst the opera which had the great run with CARL ROSA'S English Company was the *Flying Dutchman*, whilst *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* at both houses were invariably the crowded nights.

In 1861 the Parisians showed their taste and *chic* by whistling *Tannhäuser* off the stage.

In 1863 WAGNER appeared at Vienna, Prague, Leipsic, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Pesth, and conducted concerts with brilliant success. In 1864 his constant friend, the Crown Prince, now Ludwig II. of Bavaria, summoned him to Munich, where the new operas of *Tristan* in 1865, and *Meistersinger* in 1868, *Das Rheingold* in 1869, and *Die Walküre* in 1870, were successively given with ever-increasing appreciation and applause.

330. THE TETRALOGIE MEISTER. TRISTAN.

The *Meistersinger*, through which there runs a strongly

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comic vein, deals with the contrast between the old stiff forms of minstrelsy by rule and the spontaneous revolt of a free, musical, and poetical genius, and the work forms a humorous and almost Shaksperean *pendant* to the great and solemn minstrelsy which fills the centre of *Tannhäuser*. In WAGNER'S opinion it is the opera most likely to find favour with an English audience, a point since established by the German opera performances under RICHTER.

Tristan and Iseult, in which the drama and analysis of passion—love and death—is wrought up to its highest pitch, was thrown off between the two first and two last great sections of the Tetralogie, and the Tetralogie, itself planned twenty years ago and produced at Bayreuth in 1876, seemed the last most daring and complete manifestation of WAGNER'S dramatic, poetic, and musical genius, until *Parsifal* revealed still greater heights and depths in 1882.

The purpose and power of that great cycle of Scandinavian and German myths, unrolled in the four colossal dramas of *Rheingold*, *Walküre*, *Siegfried*, and *Gotterdämmerung*, would carry me far beyond the limits of a biographical chapter. Both the *Ring* and the *Parsifal* I dwell upon at some length in my account of the performances at Bayreuth of 1876, and the memorial performances of 1883.

I will now give a sketch of the general impression that

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WAGNER made upon me and upon others with whom he came in contact, and I shall conclude these biographical pages with a notice of his last days in Venice and his funeral at Bayreuth. WAGNER offended a great many people in the course of his life, but then a great many people offended WAGNER. Those who hated him lied about him unscrupulously, but not even his worst enemies ever accused WAGNER of lying about them. He was an egotist in the sense that he believed in himself; but, then, one must remember that in his own estimation for more than forty years, RICHARD WAGNER had been the greatest figure in the musical world, and that it took quite thirty years of his life to convince the world of that fact which now, for about a couple of years, we have had proclaimed by all the newspapers of Europe. If in general company his manner was reserved, and even a little acrid, was there not a cause? Such a man, with an immense consciousness of power, meeting with marvellous neglect, and trampled upon, but never crushed, by penury, misfortune, and the bitterest persecution and ridicule, naturally becomes an egotist, and is apt to play the king in disguise, and behave, even in the midst of insult, as if he expected all men to bow down before him; and then as naturally, when at last they do bow down in the most abject of attitudes, he feels a little inclined to kick them.

331. WAGNER'S EGOTISM.

When I remember that about forty years ago *Rienzi*, and

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the *Flying Dutchman,* followed by *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin,* were finished, that the master—then truly of the future—was patronised here, snubbed there, and supported himself by arranging tunes for the cornet-à-piston and piano — that he starved a little, was banished for his opinions, nearly shipwrecked, and altogether unable to get anybody except FERDINAND PRAEGER, LISZT (perhaps M. SAINTON and half-a-dozen *intimes,* some of them as unrecognised as himself) to believe in him at all—why, if there ever was a training for egotism, that was! In fact, for nearly half a century there was no one to believe in RICHARD WAGNER except RICHARD WAGNER. Then, by-and-by, the crowned heads, and, what was more to the point, the heads of opera-houses, came round, and we had bowing and scraping on all sides; and connoisseurs arrived, cap in hand, to interview the great man, and tell him to his face "RICHARD WAGNER, we deem you one of the greatest musicians that ever lived." "Bah!" says WAGNER, "I told you that forty years ago; I can do without you now!" "Oh, fie! what a vain man!" said your offended aristocrat. I never thought RICHARD WAGNER vain. I knew him to be irritable—so are other people, who only resemble him in that. I knew him to be impatient of interruption—so is your banking-clerk when stopped in the middle of a column of figures. I knew him to be proud—so are many who have nothing to be proud of; and from the first moment that I heard, now twenty years ago, the pre-

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lude to *Lohengrin*, and read a few of his letters on art, I also knew RICHARD WAGNER to be the greatest composer and the most impressive art-personality then alive in the world.

332. WAS WAGNER VAIN?

WAGNER'S was certainly one of the strongest and most independent natures I ever came across. The ordinary motives which move men had no power with him. He cared neither for money nor for rank, nor for the opinions of his contemporaries. He has been charged with a childish love of display, and it is true that from the simplest and most retiring life he would suddenly pass to the most splendid and imposing scale of living; as when on one occasion he entered Heidelberg in a carriage drawn by four horses with outriders. He was fond of beautiful surroundings, and he would dress expensively; but in these peculiarities anyone who understood WAGNER would easily see, that his excitable and artistic temperament found in these contrasts and accessories the stimulus most favourable to his ceaseless and buoyant productivity, rather than the mere freaks of personal vanity.

333. WAGNER AND THE QUEEN.

Athough the most intimate friend of the KING OF BAVARIA, he was not a man whom princes could order about or control. I remember very well his refusing to exhibit himself to order in the box of a certain high personage at the Albert Hall when he was in England, although he readily availed him-

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self of the privilege of visiting Her Majesty at Windsor. WAGNER never forgot that the QUEEN and PRINCE ALBERT recognised his genius on the occasion of his first visit to England, and his illustrious patrons were then in a very small minority.

334. WAGNER AT HOME.

WAGNER was adored by his household. He lived for some time at Lucerne in great retirement—he was then working at the *Ring*. A friend who had at that time frequent access to him, has given us some charming WAGNERIAN side-lights. Nervous and intensely impressionable, we are told his sentiments always ran into extremes, but his self-recovery was rapid. He sometimes wounded even his friends by the intense and passionate sincerity of his language; but he atoned so sweetly for a passing heat of temper, that they loved him only the more. "In WAGNER," said one of his orchestra at Bayreuth, "it is the second movement that is good."

His life in Switzerland was as regular as it was laborious. He rose at six—bathed—then reclined and read till ten—breakfasted—worked uninterruptedly from eleven till two—dined—rested, always with a book in hand—drove from four till six—worked from six till eight—supped, and spent the evening in the midst of his family.

It was in these evenings that WAGNER was most charm-

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ing. Every cloud was cleared from his brow; his face seemed radiant with a certain light-hearted good-

335. WAGNER'S GENEROSITY.

ness which diffused a happy atmosphere around him. He had a kind word for everyone, he entered into everything, and his conversation scintillated with brilliancy and humour. His boundless liberality sometimes brought him into pecuniary difficulties; he could never bear to see anyone in want; he had known too much of it himself.

His poor relations took advantage of him. His rustic family connections seemed to rise out of the earth wherever he stood, and claim his assistance or protection. They would come on a visit and forget to leave; they would drop in at meal-time; they would use his name, order things of his tradespeople and forget to pay, travel under his *prestige*, and lodge at his expense.

His heart was larger than his pocket—his generosity far exceeded the discretion of those who traded upon it. A French nobleman, COUNT GOBINEAU, said of him, "HERR WAGNER will never be perfectly happy, for there will always be someone at his elbow whose suffering or distress he will feel bound to share." As a rule the French spoke no good of WAGNER nor WAGNER of the French.

I once spent an evening in Paris at VICTOR HUGO'S house. It was not long after the Franco-Prussian War. The talk

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ran on WAGNER. The aged poet at once turned the conversation. Somewhat rashly, perhaps, I ventured to say, "Surely in the great republic of art national or even personal antipathies need not count." VICTOR HUGO cut me very short. "Monsieur," he said, "il a dit beaucoup de mal de mon pays—il a insulté la France. I cannot hear his music."

336. VICTOR HUGO ON WAGNER.

In some things WAGNER was as simple and tender as a child—so true is it that there is a child-like element in most men of genius. His agility was surprising; he was fond of climbing the trees in his garden. On such occasions MADAME WAGNER would say to his friends, "I beseech you do not look at him, or encourage him, he will only run greater risks!"

337. WAGNER'S LIGHT-HEARTEDNESS.

When he was up early, he would go round to the other bed-room doors and wake the sleepers by intoning the "Marseillaise" (he was a shocking red republican, this bosom friend of the King) to the accompaniment of what has been called the "devil's tattoo."

He was very fond of animals, especially dogs; his favourite dog "Mark" is buried not far from his own grave. The *Meistersinger* was arrested for months in consequence of attentions paid to a poor dog he had met wandering sick and masterless. The ungrateful animal bit his hand, and for months

338. KINDNESS TO ANIMALS.

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WAGNER was unable to hold a pen, but the dog was equally well cared for.

Like LISZT, he was a strong opponent of vivisection, and was fond of quoting FAUST's saying to scientific doctors: "The very dogs wouldn't live in such a world as yours!"

When not absolutely absorbed in his work, he was most thoughtful for others, and was always planning for their comfort and happiness; and, although quick and at times irritable, he could bear suffering calmly. On one occasion a lady remarked that he had been singularly sweet and amiable all day on a pleasure excursion, at a time when he was in actual physical suffering himself. He confessed at the end that he had felt very unwell, but had tried to hide this from those about him for fear of spoiling their enjoyment.

339. WAGNER'S UNSELFISHNESS.

He was naturally adored by his servants, who stayed with him so long that they became like members of the family. He had an extraordinary power of attracting people to his person. There was something irresistibly magnetic about that brilliant eye, that noble penetrating look, that insatiable and unresting vigour of emotion and intellect.

LISZT, DE BÜLOW, RICHTER, WILHELMJ, and all his staff of artists, were absolutely devoted to him, and gave him

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years of willing service which no money could have paid for or secured. The talented painter, PAUL TOUKOWSKI, left his atelier at Naples to come and live at Bayreuth and paint the *Parsifal* scenery; and what scenery it is! What a dream of summer-land is the moor and woodland in the domain of Mont Salvat! What a majestic and gorgeous hall, of more than Eastern magnificence, is that in which the mystery of the Sangrail is enacted! What dim forests, what enchanted caves, what massive walls and battlements, what enchanted bowers, what more than tropical bloom and foliage! It was long before the artist could satisfy WAGNER with that magic garden. The master would have the flowers as large as the girls, and he would have the girls exactly like the flowers. It was difficult; but it is enough to say that WAGNER willed it, and it was done.

340. TOUKOWSKI AND WAGNER.

His influence with the actors was supreme; never would they have attempted for another what they did for him. The Rhine girls were terrified at the cages in which they had to be swung up and down in the Rhine depths, singing all the time. They refused at first to face a situation which appeared more fit for acrobats than for dramatic artists. They would not get into their cages at all, until the master, with tears in his eyes, besought them to try, and then all went easily, and more than well.

341. WAGNER AND THE SINGERS.

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MADAME TITIENS had scruples at first about the Wagnerian parts as unsingable, but in her latter days she was quite "fanatisé" about the part of Ortrud, in which she was superb, and she used to declare that WAGNER'S rôles gave her the fullest and freest scope for her vocalisation and acting. The singer SCHNOR, who was identified with the part of Tristram, when he was told on his death-bed of the preparations for the performance of the *Niebelungen Ring* at Bayreuth, exclaimed—it was his last regret—"Then, after all, I shall never sing Siegfried."

342. AN EVENING AT WAGNER'S HOUSE.

I confess I came fully under WAGNER'S spell—I spent a delightful evening at his house in 1876. It was at the close of the first Bayreuth festival. All the corps dramatic were present—RICHTER the conductor was chatting with WILHELMJ, the leader of the orchestra, when I went up to him and asked him whether he had recruited his strength well at Nurenberg. There a few nights before I had met him in company with PROFESSOR ELLA, and in the quiet old city of ALBERT DÜRER—whither he had escaped for a rest between the continued performances of the *Ring*—we had spent an evening over a good bottle of Rhine wine, amid the fumes of those detestable black cheroots which LISZT was so fond of.

Then I caught sight of WALTER BACHE, who introduced me to LISZT; and presently RICHTER took me up and presented me to WAGNER.

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His face beamed with kindness and geniality; he spoke French, said he had been in England long long ago, and would perhaps come again. He had great doubts whether the English were sufficiently serious in art ever to appreciate his *Ring*, and seemed pleased when I told him of the great popularity of his music at the Promenade Concerts, and the increasing appreciation of *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser*. "Earlier works," he said, shrugging his shoulders.

And MATERNA, the unique Brünnhilde, was there. WAGNER had taken endless trouble in forming her for the *Niebelungen Ring* and the great part she was to play; and master and pupil always entertained the liveliest admiration and affection for each other, which sometimes took an amusing and demonstrative form. That night, when Brünnhilde, an immense woman, arrived *en grande toilette*, and wearing some of her best jewels, she bore directly down upon WAGNER—a spare, short, fragile little man. Her enormous bulk seemed to extinguish him for a moment. On reaching him with difficulty in the midst of the glittering crowd she embraced him rapturously—German fashion—with "Ach, HERR WAGNER!"

WAGNER stood it like a man; but towards the close of the evening I beheld the MATERNA bearing down upon him again, and as she neared him he held up both his hands energetically repelling a second attack, "Nein, nein, Frau MATERNA, das will ich gar nicht," and poor Brünnhilde had to put up with a hand-shake instead.

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I saw him again in England—it was on that very evening he declined to go with me to be presented to a Royal Princess at the house of a well-known nobleman. If I have cause to regret that circumstance I have also cause to remember that evening with some satisfaction—not only did I hear him read one act of his *Parsifal,* but I received from him a singular token of personal regard. I remember LISZT telling me with some pride how he had received the celebrated "Kiss of BEETHOVEN"—BEETHOVEN was not in the habit, it seems, of embracing people. I now recall with a feeling of singular satisfaction the occasion on which WAGNER favoured me in the same way, with a kiss.

He advanced towards me as I suddenly entered the room with "Ach mein lieber HERR HAWEIS, was haben Sie den über mich schön geschrieben!" and so saying, taking me by both elbows, he saluted me on both cheeks in the orthodox manner.

343. WAGNER'S THEATRE.

WAGNER'S friendship with the KING OF BAVARIA had no doubt contributed largely to the realization of all his plans during his own life-time. The notion of building a special theatre where the orchestra should be out of sight—the seats arranged tier above tier, with a single row of boxes and a gallery above them—had been long in his mind.

The King was anxious for the theatre to be in Munich; but the opposition of the Court, on account of WAGNER'S

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political opinions, was then too great. Later on the hotel-keepers offered to build a theatre there on their own account, and to carry out WAGNER's plans free of charge as a speculation.

WAGNER declined. He chose Bayreuth. He was beholden to none save the King and his own followers. They had stood by him, rehearsed his fame, produced his works, and they built his theatre; but every detail was directed by WAGNER, and the perfection which the Bayreuth performances have at last reached is due to the same exhaustive and unremitting personal care.

344. WAGNER'S CONDUCTING.

It was only natural that the master should yield the bâton to a friend like RICHTER, whose experience, physique, and consummate talent would enable him to perfect the executive part of the work; but it was my privilege in England to see WAGNER himself conduct some of his own music at the Albert Hall. Some said he had already lost nerve as a conductor, and, indeed, had never possessed the requisite patience. That may have been to some extent true, but it did not strike me. I went home and wrote the following note, which I see no reason to alter now:

"WAGNER's notion is evidently not to rave, but to command, and to deal with his men as one who gives them credit for knowing their own business, instead of treating them like a set of raw recruits, who have to be bullied,

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shouted at, sworn to, and licked into shape from end to end. The most intense power, concentration, and active energy is often the most silent. Look at the silent, irresistible weight of the fly-wheel that drives the machinery of a large manufactory, or the noiseless swing of the steam hammer, or the intense, but silent, and apparently motionless vigour of the poised eagle, or the rapt calmness of a MOLTKE, who watches from the hill-side every evolution of the troops inspired by him. Only occasionally does he raise his telescope, pointing his hand, or sending out scouts and subalterns; and in proportion as all goes well, is fitly inspired, is the embodiment of his will—is he calm. So the "listless" WAGNER sits and orders his band, and they know his mind and obey his look, and heed his smallest gesture, often even quite unperceived by the audience; and this worries the critics. With the best intentions they can't make it out, who are used to their hop, skip, and a jump, and their one, two, three and away conductors! Doubtless, but the old man wins."

A French critic has since written: "WAGNER plays on the orchestra as though it were a gigantic fiddle, with a firmness of touch which never fails him, and sovereign authority before which all are happy in bowing down. To have an idea of so extraordinary a conductor, one must have seen him." I do not therefore imply that WAGNER in his last years was fitted to go through the kind of drudgery which RICHTER willingly under-

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took, and which culminated in the triumph of 1876 at Bayreuth.

345. THE FESTIVALS OF 1876–82.

The close of WAGNER's life was crowned by the two great Olympian-like festivals in 1876 and 1882. The Memorial Festival in 1883 was his requiem; whilst the whole of the city was resounding with his name and fame, the great master's body lay at rest in a funereal bower adjoining the Neue Schloss. The event of 1876 was, I suppose, unprecedented in the annals of Modern Art. I have devoted to it a separate notice. It was my privilege to witness the first unfolding of those four colossal musical dramas of the *Nibelung's Ring* on the Bayreuth stage. People had assembled from all parts of the civilised world; kings, princes, and nobles mingled in that motley throng. The dramas lasted every day from four till ten, with intervals of an hour between the acts. The whole population lived only in the life of that great cycle of tragedies in which gods, demi-gods, and mortals acted out, with more than earthly intensity, the perennially interesting dramas of human life and passion.

346. THE WAGNER MANIA IN LONDON.

It was between the Festival of 1876 at Bayreuth, and the performance of *Parsifal* in 1882, that WAGNER came to England to assist at the presentation of the *Ring* music at the Albert Hall. He was shaken in health, and exceedingly indisposed to take any

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exertion not directly bearing upon his work—which was the new *Parsifal* drama. He was not satisfied with his reception at the Albert Hall. He was much courted in society, but avoided anything like public receptions, and was considered over-retiring and reticent by casual observers.

The WAGNER *furor* being now on the increase after his departure, the two principal London theatres were opened in the spring and summer of 1880—Covent Garden for the performance of the *Nibelung's Ring*, and Drury Lane for the presentation of all his other operas *seriatim*. Neither proved a commercial success, the market being thus quite over-stocked. But the WAGNER excitement was still on the increase, and when the *Parsifal* came to be produced at Bayreuth in 1882, Bayreuth was as thronged as in 1876. I was not present at that festival, but I have given a special account of the Memorial performance which I attended in the following year.

WAGNER died suddenly on the 13th of February 1883, at Venice, whither he had come to recruit after the *Parsifal* performances in 1882, and to prepare for their renewal in the following year. He was cut off in the full vigour of his productive genius. Time had not dimmed his eye, nor shaken his hand, nor closed a single channel of thought or emotion. He sank thus suddenly in the spring of the year 1883, not without some warning, yet enjoying life up to its latest hour. "I

347. TO VENICE.

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will bear no longer the grey clouds and wintry skies of Bayreuth," he had said to his friends in the autumn of 1882.

A suite of apartments in the Palace Vendramin at Venice had been secured for him, and his children—DANIEL, EVA, ISOLDE, and SIEGFRIED (now twelve years old) were already there. Venice was in the greatest excitement on his arrival. Italy had been in the strangest way won over to WAGNER at Bologna, under the able and enthusiastic bâton of a lamented Maestro; indeed, LISZT told me he had never heard WAGNER's operas more effectively given, except at Bayreuth.

348. HIS TEMPERAMENTAL VIGOUR.

It was WAGNER's desire to be left quiet at Venice, and his wishes were sedulously respected; but he was never inaccessible, and he was often to be found in the Café, surrounded by a group of friends. The first remark of the Venetians who saw that spare, vivid figure, with flashing eye, and who heard the master's eager eloquent conversation, full of wit and geniality, was, "Why, he is not an old man at all!" It is true, there is something of the eternal child—an *afflatus* of divine youth —about all great genius.

349. HIS MORNING.

WAGNER rose in Italy at Venice between five and six, and worked till ten. In Venice he wrote his last art criticisms; and whilst the Italian newspapers affirmed that he was already at work upon a drama connected with Buddha and the great

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Aryan legends, the German prints declared that he had turned his attention towards Greece, and was going to Athens to try and recover on the spot something connected with the ancient Greek music. At the same time he was indefatigable in his efforts to prepare for the repetitions of *Parsifal* in 1883, at which he intended to be present and which were carried out at Bayreuth with such magnificent success—July 1883—in sad memory of his death.

He was already suffering from heart-disease, and sat usually—the weather being chilly—in his fur coat. A glass of wine was always at hand, and when he suffered pain he would sip cognac.

His rooms, however, before breakfast were sacred, and his wife COSIMA scrupulously respected them; but at ten o'clock she went in to bring him his letters, and after a short private chat the family breakfasted together. WAGNER would then take his hat and go down the marble steps looking out upon the canal, and ask his gondolier about the weather. If too cold to venture out he would stroll forth, often with his wife, and go into LAVENNA'S, the pastrycook's, and buy bon-bons for the children.

350. HIS AFTERNOON.

Between four and six o'clock he might often be seen in the arcades and streets, with all the family, buying little presents for friends, or sipping coffee or the good fresh beer beloved of all true Germans. The military band which played occasionally in

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the great square had produced a version of the *Lohengrin* overture in his honour, but played it in such fashion that poor WAGNER was constrained to take refuge in the pastrycook's shop and stop his ears with both hands.

On another occasion, however, he went up to the bandmaster, in his great coat and slouched hat, and asked him to play something out of ROSSINI's *Gazza Ladra*. The conductor, not recognising WAGNER, answered civilly that he had none of the music there, and otherwise could not well derange the programme. On WAGNER retiring a musician told the bandmaster who the stranger was. Filled with confusion and regret, the worthy man instantly sent for copies of the *Gazza Ladra* selection, and played it for two consecutive days. WAGNER was much pleased, and, again going up to the band, expressed his thanks, and praised especially the solo cornet, who had much distinguished himself.

The master dined early in the afternoon, and usually took a short nap afterwards, the faithful BETTY BURKEL, a confidential family servant, always being at hand in the next room, knitting quietly.

At half-past three the gondolier was usually in attendance, and in fine weather the Lido, the public gardens, the San Lazzaro, and Giudecca were visited.

In the milder autumn days of 1882, WAGNER, whose

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breathing was occasionally oppressed, seemed to inhale new
351. health and vigour out upon the wide lagunes.
WAGNER AND BYRON LOVE LIGHT. "Ah!" he would say, drawing a long breath; "no smoke, no dust!" At night his sitting-rooms were a blaze of light with quantities of wax-candles. People used to look up at BYRON's quarters when he was in Venice, and wonder what festival could be going on. The waters of the Grand Canal were all aglow, but it was only BYRON, alone with the MSS. of *Manfred*, *Parisina*, and *Don Juan*. WAGNER's old porter happened to be brother to BYRON's old servant, FIDO. "There is something like BYRON about this great German," he remarked. "What is that?" they asked. "Why, he has the same marvellous need of wax candles!" "Where light is there is joy," WAGNER used to say, quoting the Italian proverb.

As the evenings drew in, WAGNER used to read aloud to his family—usually from some dramatic author. He sometimes got so excited that the good people in the house knocked at the door to know if anything ailed the master?

When absorbed in thought, he was in the habit of pacing up and down the room, with his hands behind him. He even had pockets made at the back of his coat. DR. KEPPLER said this position of the arms allowed him to breathe more freely, and eased the diseased action of the heart.

On November 19, 1882, LISZT came to see him at Venice. The two old men embraced each other affectionately on

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the marble stairs. They sat long hours together in deep and friendly converse. JOUKOVSKI, the artist, who had painted the *Parsifal* scenery, and for whom the genius of WAGNER had an irresistible attraction, was also there. He painted a remarkable portrait of LISZT, and a "Sacred Family" of JESUS, JOSEPH, and MARY. The guardian angels in the air above were all portraits of WAGNER'S children.

352. LISZT'S VISIT TO WAGNER.

LISZT was usually up at four o'clock, and both WAGNER and LISZT got through a great deal of serious work in those small hours.

WAGNER'S personal popularity at Venice was extraordinary. In a short time he and every member of his family were known even to the children of the poor. The master was open-handed and sympathetic to all. He seemed ever about—now with his wife, or with little EVA, his pet daughter, or SIEGFRIED. He mixed with the people, chatted and joked, and was ever ready to relieve the poor. He was worshipped by his gondoliers. "He patted me on the back," said one, "asked me if I was tired, and said '*Amico mio*, so the Carnival has come to an end.'" The man repeated the incident everywhere, as if it had been the great event of his life. "They say he is greater than a king; isn't it so?" (*Egli e piu di un re, discono non e' vero?*) was the common talk in the streets as he passed.

353. WAGNER BELOVED BY THE PEOPLE.

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On December 23, 1882, WAGNER conducted his earliest symphony at the request of a small circle of friends in celebration of MADAME WAGNER'S birthday. On taking the bâton he turned to the musicians and said :—

354. STRANGE PRESENTIMENT.

"This is the last time I shall ever conduct."

"Why?" they asked.

"Because I shall soon die."

This was not at all his usual mood; he spoke sometimes of living till ninety—he said that he could hardly finish the work he had in his mind even then. His doctor knew that his heart-disease must one day carry him off, but hoped the end might be delayed for five or six years at least. He was very sanguine himself, but not over-prudent. He took too much tea and coffee and stimulant; he was deaf to all warnings, and joked on the doctors forbidding their patients to indulge in these things without setting them a good example. But there were moments when his words, spoken lightly, were unconsciously prophetic of the coming end. He had taken the utmost delight in the Carnival of 1883 at Venice, and on the first day of Lent said to his gondolier, "And where is it the fashion to go to-day?" "To the new necropolis, my gracious master," replied the man. Arrived at the necropolis, WAGNER alighted and walked all over the place admiring the quiet and reposeful niches and the tastefully laid-out lawns and shrubberies.

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"And was my worshipful sir pleased?" asked the gondolier.

"Yes, uncommonly," replied WAGNER; "and I shall soon find some such quiet spot for my own last resting-place."

Indeed, there were mornings when he would go out and return breathless in ten minutes. Once at his banker's, and again at the pastrycook's, he was seized with faintness and put into his gondola. He urgently begged that his family might not be told of this. They had their own misgivings. When alone he had been overheard groaning, and was found sometimes with his hand pressed to his heart; but he would rally and make light of it, and soon seemed quite well again; indeed, on the 12th (he died on the 13th) he said he felt better than he had done for weeks—the breathing was freer and the pulse regular.

355. THE APPROACH OF DEATH.

February 13th came black with clouds. The rain poured in torrents. WAGNER rose as usual, and announced his wish not to be disturbed till dinner-time, two o'clock. He had much to do—much to finish—overmuch indeed, and the time was short.

The master did not feel quite well, and COSIMA, his wife, bade BETTY, the servant, take her work and not leave the ante-room in case her master should call or ring.

The faithful creature seemed to have some presentiment that all was not right. She listened hour after hour—heard the master striding up and down as was his wont.

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Wife COSIMA came in from time to time. "The master works ever," said BETTY, "and has not called for anything —now he walks to and fro."

At one o'clock WAGNER rang his bell and asked: "Is the gondola ordered at four o'clock? Good; then I will take a plate of soup up here, for I don't feel very well."

There was nothing unusual about this, for when absorbed in work he would often thus have his light luncheon alone.

The servant brought in a plate of soup and retired. All seemed quiet for some time. Then suddenly a hurried pacing up and down the room was heard. The footsteps ceased—a sharp cough, checked. BETTY threw down her work, walked on tip-toe to the door, and listened with all her ears. She heard one deep groan; she stood for a moment divided between a resolve to call COSIMA or break through her master's orders and go into his room at once. The suspense was soon over. "BETTY!" It was WAGNER'S voice, very faint. BETTY rushed in. WAGNER was leaning back on his sofa, his fur coat was half off, his feet rested on a foot-stool. His face was fearfully changed—his features cadaverous and drawn down with pain evidently; with the utmost difficulty he contrived to murmur, but almost inaudibly, "Call my wife and the doctor." He never spoke again.

356. DEATH.

The terrified BETTY rushed off to tell wife COSIMA. The

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instant she saw him she cried, "To the doctor, BETTY!" DR. KEPPLER was sent for three times; at last he was found just finishing an operation. Meanwhile MADAME WAGNER had sat down by her husband. He immediately laid his head on her shoulder, groaning, but speechless; and she placed her arms about him, and with one hand rubbed his heart, an act which had sometimes eased him when in pain. His breathing grew softer and lighter, and presently he seemed to subside into a quiet, motionless sleep. She thought it a good sign.

About half an hour afterwards the doctor came. One glance was enough. He found MADAME WAGNER still holding her husband in both her arms, with his head resting on her shoulder. "He sleeps," she said—and the good doctor, suppressing his emotion with a great effort, did not tell her that it was the sleep of death, and that now for a long time she had been embracing a corpse.

DR. KEPPLER, after feeling for the pulse that was never to beat again, gently took the body of WAGNER in both his arms and carried it to his bed. It could not be called his death-bed, for WAGNER died as he had lived, working—the table before him was strewn with books and MSS., with the ink scarcely dry upon the last page.

DR. KEPPLER then turned to COSIMA and said, with irrepressible emotion, "He is dead!" The poor wife, who had been so absolutely one in body, soul, and mind with her husband, fell prostrate with a great cry upon his lifeless

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body, nor for some time could any persuasion induce her to leave the corpse which she continued to embrace.

But over the intense sorrow of this true-hearted and affectionate German family I will draw the veil. The servants all seemed to lose their heads. A vast crowd had by this time assembled outside the palace "Vendramin." The bulletin had flown through Venice "RICHARD WAGNER is very ill—the doctor is at his bed-side." No more than this was known in the town at half-past four. At half-past five DR. KEPPLER came down the steps and was greeted with shouts of "The doctor! the doctor!" In the dead silence which followed, DR. KEPPLER, uncovering his head, said, "RICHARD WAGNER is dead. He died an hour ago from the effects of heart disease."

357. RECEPTION OF THE NEWS.

No sooner had DR. KEPPLER pronounced the words "RICHARD WAGNER is dead!" from the steps of the "Vendramin Palace," than the vast throng assembled outside to hear the news dispersed with cries of "Dead! dead!" and in a short time there was not a café in Venice without the bulletin "*Riccardo Wagner, il famoso tedesco, il gran Maestro del Vendramin, è morto.*" It was commonly said that since GARIBALDI'S death no such sensation had been felt in Venice.

The gondolier, who had been ordered by WAGNER at

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four o'clock, had been in attendance ever since. Poor

358. THE GONDOLIER'S TRIBUTE.

Luigi heard the news in speechless astonishment and grief; at last, breaking out in sobs, he exclaimed, "Ah! to think that only yesterday I rowed him in this gondola—the good, noble, great man, who never said an unkind word to any of us, although he was so ill! Here, here is his name"; and he held up his ivory-handled walking-stick with the initials "R. W." "And now he must needs die—*Per Bacco!* Poor dear man! how many people in this world could have been better spared!" Luigi also took care of a little kitten which had become a pet of Wagner's, having been rescued by him from an untimely end in the canal. "See," he would say, "even this kitten he saved from drowning two months ago knows what it has lost. It will hardly move; it lies always here in the gondola, just behind where the master used to sit."

359. FUNERAL HONOURS.

Ill news in these days of telegraphy flies indeed apace. The wires were blocked. In the course of the week no less than five thousand despatches of condolence reached Venice, addressed to the Wagner family, from all parts of the civilised world.

Soon after death Wagner's body was embalmed by his devoted medical attendant, Dr. Keppler, and a cast of his face was taken by Signor Benvenuto.

The bronze coffin, which arrived from Vienna, was carried

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upstairs by HANS RICHTER, the painter JOUKOVSKY, DR. KEPPLER, PASSINI, and RUBEN; and the dead master was borne to his funereal gondola by the same devoted friends. The general expressions of sympathy were confined to no class.

The Italian Government had offered the family a public ceremony, which was declined; yet I know not what greater honour could have been paid him than the spontaneous grief of all Venice. The high municipal officers, the chief nobles, and an immense throng accompanied the gondola to the station. The canals were crowded with gondolas draped in crape.

In all the ports through which the coffin passed the flags floated half-mast high. At every town where there was a stoppage the municipalities sent deputations, and the coffin was strewn with fresh flowers.

At the head of the bier there was one enormous wreath, sent by the KING OF BAVARIA, WAGNER'S close friend, and at Munich the King sent his representative to accompany the funeral *cortège* to Bayreuth.

I will not dwell further upon the honours paid by the way, the processions of musical societies, the numberless wreaths, which by the time the coffin reached Bayreuth amounted to fourteen hundred and filled two large cars.

On the 17th the bier was received at the station by the

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inhabitants of Bayreuth *en masse*. It was a solemn moment when the widow and her children stepped out of their carriage, and all the people silently uncovered their heads.

360. ARRIVAL OF THE COFFIN AT BAYREUTH.

A brigade of firemen moved in front of the hearse, which was drawn by four black horses. All the gas lamps were lighted along the road, and black pennons streamed from tall poles to right and left. Midway a fresh wreath arrived from the king with a large inscription, "*To the Deathless One*," and at the same time the burgomaster laid another one on the coffin in the name of the city of Bayreuth.

Arrived at WAGNER'S house, "Vahnfried"—only a select company were admitted to the garden—the coffin rested for a space at the entrance, but was not taken into the house.

It was MADAME WAGNER'S express wish that no speeches or prayers should be made at the grave—which had long since been dug, by WAGNER'S orders, in a retired spot of his own garden, surrounded by thick bushes and fir-trees. A simple blessing in the name of the Church was to be given, and the coffin then lowered in silence.

An immense slab of grey polished granite rested above it, and the vault door was to be opened on one side. Hither was the body now brought by a silent and sorrowing throng of attached friends, amongst them LISZT, BÜLOW, RICHTER, JOUKOVSKY, and

361. THE GRAVE.

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many more. On either side walked WAGNER'S children, and when the coffin was about to be slid into the grave, they mounted on the grey slab above it and knelt down.

At this moment WAGNER'S two favourite dogs burst through the thickets, and sprang towards the children to seek their usual caresses—they, too, had lost a kind master, but they knew it not.

Then HERR CASELMANN, in the simplest words, committed the departed, and all his family, to the care of CHRIST, and blessed the assembly and the grave in the name of the Church. This was all in exact accordance with MADAME WAGNER'S wishes. A few took a leaf or a flower as it fell from the piled-up heap, and the body was lowered silently into its last resting-place—earth to earth—dust to dust!

. . . . .

I visited Bayreuth on the 24th of July, 1883, and attended two crowded performances of WAGNER'S last work,

362. I VISIT WAGNER'S GRAVE.

Parsifal. In the morning I went into the beautiful gardens of the Neue Schloss. On either side of a lake, upon which floated a couple of swans and innumerable water-lilies, the long park-like avenues of trees are vocal with wild doves, and the robin is heard in the adjoining thickets. At my approach the sweet song ceases abruptly, and the startled bird flies out, scattering the pale petals of the wild roses

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upon my path. I follow a stream of people on foot, as they move down the left-hand avenue in the garden of the Neue Schloss, which adjoins WAGNER'S own grounds.

Some are going—some are coming. Presently I see an opening in the bushes on my left; the path leads me to a clump of evergreens. I follow it, and come suddenly on the great composer's grave. All about the green square mound the trees are thick—laurel, fir, and yew. The shade falls funereally across the immense grey granite slab; but over the dark foliage the sky is bright blue, and straight in front of me, above the low bushes, I can see the bow-windows of the dead master's study—where I spent with him one delightful evening in 1876.

I can see, too, the jet of water that he loved playing high above the hedge of evergreen. It lulls me with its sound. "Vahnfried! Vahnfried!" it seems to murmur. It was the word written above the master's house—the word he most loved—the word his tireless spirit most believed in—how shall I render it? "Dream-life! dream-life! Earth's illusion of joy!"

Great spirit! thy dream-life here is past, and face to face with truth, "rapt from the fickle and the frail," for thee the illusion has vanished! Mayst thou also know the fulness of joy in the unbroken and serene activities of the eternal Reality!

I visited the grave twice. There is nothing written on the granite slab. There were never present less than twenty

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persons, and a constant stream of pilgrims kept coming and going.

One gentle token of the master's pitiful and tender regard for the faithful dumb animals he so loved lies but a few feet off in the same garden, and not far from his own grave.

Upon a mossy bank, surrounded with evergreens, is a small marble slab, with this inscription to his favourite dog:—

"*Here lies in peace 'Vahnfried's' faithful watcher and friend—the good and beautiful Mark*" (der gute, schöne Mark)!

I returned, too, to WAGNER's tomb, plucked a branch of the fir tree that waved above it, and went back to my room to prepare myself by reading and meditation for the great religious drama which I was to witness at four o'clock in the afternoon—WAGNER's latest and highest inspiration—the story of the sacred brotherhood, the knights of San Graal—*Parsifal!*

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Richard Wagner

(Last Portrait.)

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III.

INTERLUDE

ON THE LAST CROWN.

WAGNER worked at *Parsifal* with incredible speed, but with that extraordinary elaboration of detail which he himself declared taxed his brain to the utmost. He sometimes complained that he could employ no one to help him adequately in scoring the parts. Nothing ever satisfied him unless he did it himself. As he advanced the toil increased. He would say that even the score of *Lohengrin*—in which he had not yet sounded all the resources of the orchestral art—was light work in comparison with such an effort as *Parsifal*. He laboured at this with great love and tireless zeal. He often declared that it would be his last work, although his busy brain, at Venice, was already revolving new fields of thought—new worlds to conquer.

363. ELABORATE SCORING.

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His friends noticed with anxiety that failing freshness and vigour of body—not of mind—pathetic traces of which are noticeable in that last very fine photograph (profile) of which I give a woodcut, and which has been engraved in most of the memoirs since published. The expression of the countenance is softened. It is the face of a man who has done with fighting and escaped defeat, but is left with a certain weariness of spirit.

364. LAST PHOTOGRAPH.

Still, the last year of WAGNER's life was full of halcyon days; his sun went down in a sky of unclouded serenity. He had won more than all he could have expected to win; for in the early days he had often said in despair, "I shall never make my ideas understood"—and he lived to see the mighty conceptions of his genius realised.

His farewell banquet at Bayreuth after the *Parsifal* festival in 1882 was a dignified and touching adieu to friends, many of whom he was never to see again. Something has been said about a feeling of rivalry between LISZT and WAGNER in the last days. Nothing could be more false and unfounded. "WAGNER a fait un autre miracle," said LISZT, when he attended the rehearsals of *Parsifal* in 1882, and WAGNER's affectionate speech in answer to the glowing language in which LISZT proposed his health at the great banquet held afterwards, showed very well how deep and indissoluble was the nature of their friendship. When LISZT sat down

365. SPEECHES BY LISZT AND WAGNER.

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amidst loud acclamations, WAGNER rose, and in the following simple and unaffected words recalled all he owed to LISZT:

"On this day, when the preparations for the performances of my last work are completed; when, thanks to this concourse of eminent artists, I may look with pleasure and pride on the achievement, I feel myself called upon to speak, to all of you assembled here at my invitation, of the influence that this exceptional and unique man has had on my whole artistic career. At a time when—as they say in Germany—I was a most distinctly repudiated 'Mossoo,' LISZT came forward—LISZT, who had evolved from his innermost consciousness a profound comprehension of myself and my work. He said to me, 'Thou man of Art, I believe in thee,' and so he became the bridge that led me from one world to another—from the inner world, I mean, into which I had unreservedly retired, into the outer world on whose discerning judgment the creative artist has to depend, and in which, at that time, every hand was against me. He it is that sustained and uplifted me as no other did. I call upon you to drink to the health of F. LISZT."

When WAGNER, in the autumn of 1882, left the cloudy skies of Bayreuth for sunny Italy, he also left the scene of his triumphs, which he was never to revisit alive. In the spring of the following year, as I have related, his body was brought back and laid in his garden at Bayreuth, and in the July following I went to Bayreuth to be present at

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the repetition of the *Parsifal* performances, every detail of which WAGNER had superintended in the previous year. I shall never see the like again—the glow of the master's spirit was still upon the actors, the musicians, and the audience.

IV.

PARSIFAL.

THE blood of God!—mystic symbol of Divine life—"for the blood is the life thereof." That is the key-note of *Parsifal*, the Knight of the Sangrail. Wine is the ready symbolical vehicle—the material link between the divine and the human life. In the old religions, that heightened consciousness, that intensity of feeling produced by stimulant, was thought to be the very entering in of the "god"—the union of the Divine and human spirit; and in the Eleusinian mysteries, the "sesame"—the bread of Demeter, the earth mother; the "kykeon," or wine of Dionysos—the vine god—were thus sacramental.

866. THE MYSTIC UNION.

The passionate desire to approach and mingle with Deity is the one mystic bond common to all religions in all

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lands. It is the "cry of the human": it traverses the ages, it exhausts many symbols and transcends all forms.

To the Christian it is summed up in the "Lord's Supper."

The mediæval legend of the Sangrail (real or royal blood) is the most poetic and pathetic form of transubstantiation—in it the gross materialism of the Roman Mass almost ceases to be repulsive; it possesses the true legendary power of attraction and assimilation.

As the Knights of the Table Round, with their holy vows, provided mediæval Chivalry with a centre, so did the Lord's table, with its Sangrail, provide Mediæval Religion with its central attractive point. And as all marvellous tales of knightly heroism circled round King Arthur's table, so did the great legends embodying the Christian conceptions of sin, punishment, and redemption circle round the Sangrail and the sacrifice of the "Mass."

In the legends of *Parsifal* and *Lohengrin*, the knightly and religious elements are welded together. This is enough. We need approach *Parsifal* with no deep knowledge of the various Sagas made use of by WAGNER in his drama. His disciples, whilst most eager to trace its various elements to their sources, are most emphatic in declaring that the *Parsifal* drama, so intimately true to the spirit of Roman Catholicism, is nevertheless a new creation.

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JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA received in a crystal cup the blood of CHRIST as it flowed from the spear-wound made by the Roman soldier. The cup and the spear were committed to Titurel, who became a holy knight and head of a sacred brotherhood of knights. They dwelt in the Vizigoth Mountains of Southern Spain, where, amidst impenetrable forests, rose the legendary palace of Montsalvat. Here they guarded the sacred relics, issuing forth at times from their palatial fortress, like Lohengrin, to fight for innocence and right, and always returning to renew their youth and strength by the celestial contemplation of the Sangrail, and by occasional participation in the holy feast.

367. MONTSALVAT.

Time and history count for very little in these narratives. It was allowed, however, that Titurel the Chief had grown extremely aged, but as it was not allowed that he could die in the presence of the Sangrail, he seemed to have been laid in a kind of trance, resting in an open tomb beneath the altar of the Grail; and whenever the cup was uncovered his voice might be heard joining in the celebration. Meanwhile, Amfortis, his son, reigned in his stead.

368. TITUREL.

Montsalvat, with its pure, contemplative, but active brotherhood, and its mystic cup, thus stands out as the poetic symbol of all that is highest and best in mediæval Christianity.

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The note of the wicked world—Magic for Devotion—Sensuality for Worship—breaks in upon our vision, as the scene changes from the halls of Montsalvat to

369. KLINGSOR.

Klingsor's palace. Klingsor, an impure knight, who has been refused admittance to the order of the "Sangrail," enters into a compact with the powers of evil—by magic acquires arts of diabolical fascination—fills his palace and gardens with enchantments, and wages bitter war against the holy knights, with a view of corrupting them, and ultimately, it may be, of acquiring for himself the "Sangrail," in which all power is believed to reside. Many knights have already succumbed to the "insidious arts" of Klingsor; but the tragical turning point of the *Parsifal* is that Amfortis, himself the son of Titurel, the official guardian of the Grail, in making war upon the magician, took with him the sacred spear, and *lost* it to Klingsor.

It came about in this way. A woman of unearthly loveliness won him in the enchanted bowers, adjoining the evil knight's palace, and Klingsor, seizing the

370. THE FALL OF AMFORTIS.

holy spear, thrust it into Amfortis' side, inflicting therewith an incurable wound. The brave knight, Gurnemanz, dragged his master fainting from the garden, his companions of the Sangrail covering their retreat. But returned to Montsalvat, the unhappy king awakes only to bewail his sin, the loss of the sacred spear,

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and the ceaseless harrowing smart of an incurable wound. But who is Parsifal?

. . . . .

The smell of pine-woods in July! The long avenue outside the city of Bayreuth, that leads straight up the hill, crowned by the Wagner Theatre, a noble structure — architecturally admirable — severe, simple, but exactly adapted to its purpose . . . . I join the stream of pilgrims, some in carriages, others on foot. As we approach, a clear blast of trombones and brass from the terrace in front of the grand entrance, plays out the Grail "motive." It is the well-known signal—there is no time to be lost. I enter at the prescribed door, and find myself close to my appointed place. Everyone—such is the admirable arrangement—seems to do likewise. In a few minutes about one thousand persons are seated without confusion. The theatre is darkened, the foot-lights are lowered, the prelude begins.

371. I ENTER THE THEATRE.

Act I.

The waves of sound rise from the shadowy gulph sunken between the audience and the foot-lights. Upon the sound ocean of "wind" the "Take eat," or "Love-feast" motive floats. Presently the strings pierce through it, the Spear motive follows, and then, full of heavy pain, "Drink ye all of this," followed

372. ORCHESTRAL PRELUDE.

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by the famous Grail motive—an old chorale also used by MENDELSSOHN in the Reformation Symphony. Then comes the noble Faith and Love theme.

As I sit in the low light, amidst the silent throng, and listen, I need no interpreter, I am being placed in possession of the emotional key-notes of the drama. Every subject is first distinctly enunciated, and then all are wondrously blended together. There is the pain of Sacrifice—the mental agony, the bodily torture—there are the alternate pauses of Sorrow and respite from sorrow long drawn out, the sharp ache of Sin, the glimpses of unhallowed Joy, the strain of upward Endeavour, the serene peace of Faith and Love, crowned by the blessed Vision of the Grail. 'Tis past. The prelude melts into the opening recitative.

The eyes have now to play their part. The curtain rises, the story begins. The morning breaks slowly, the grey streaks redden, a lovely summer landscape lies bathed in primrose light. Under the shadow of a noble tree, the aged knight, Gurnemanz, has been resting with two young attendants. From the neighbouring halls of Montsalvat the solemn *reveillé*—the Grail motive—rings out, and all three sink on their knees in prayer. The sun bursts forth in splendour, as the hymn rises to mingle with the voices of universal nature. The waves of sound well up and fill the soul with unspeakable thankfulness and praise.

373. SUNRISE.

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The talk is of Amfortis, the king, and of his incurable wound. A wild gallop, a rush of sound, and a weird woman, with streaming hair, springs towards the startled group. She bears a phial, with rare balsam from the Arabian shores. It is for the king's wound. Who is the wild horsewoman?—Kundry—strange creation—a being doomed to wander—like the Wandering Jew, the wild Huntsman, or Flying Dutchman—always seeking a deliverance she cannot find—Kundry, who, in ages gone by, met the Saviour on the road to Calvary, and derided him. Some said she was Herodias' daughter. Now filled with remorse, yet weighted with sinful longings, she serves by turns the Knights of the Grail, then falls under the spell of Klingsor, the evil knight sorcerer, and in the guise of an enchantress, is compelled by him to seduce, if possible, the Knights of the Grail.

374. KUNDRY.

Eternal symbol of the divided allegiance of a woman's soul! She it was who, under the sensual spell, as an incarnation of loveliness, overcame Amfortis, and she it is now who, in her ardent quest for salvation—changed and squalid in appearance—serves the Knights of the Grail, and seeks to heal Amfortis' wound!

No sooner has she delivered her balsam to the faithful Gurnemanz, and thrown herself exhausted upon the grass—where she lies gnawing her hair morosely—than a change in the sound atmosphere, which never ceases to be generated

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in the mystic orchestral gulph, presages the approach of Amfortis.

375. AMFORTIS APPROACHES.

He comes, borne on a litter, to his morning bath in the shining lake hard by. Sharp is the pain of the wound—weary and hopeless is the king. Through the Wound-motive comes the sweet woodland music and the breath of the blessed morning, fragrant with flowers and fresh with dew. It is one of those incomparable bursts of woodland notes, full of bird-song and the happy hum of insect life and rustling of netted branches and waving of long tasselled grass. I know of nothing like it save the forest music in *Siegfried*.

The sick king listens, and remembers words of hope and comfort that fell from a heavenly voice—what time the glory of the Grail passed—

"Durch mitleid Wissend
Der reine Thor,
Harre sein
Den ich erkor."

"Wait for my chosen one,
Guileless and innocent,
Pity-enlightened."

They hand him the phial of balsam; and presently, whilst the lovely forest music again breaks forth, the king is carried on to his bath, and Kundry, Gurnemanz, and the two esquires hold the stage.

As the old knight, who is a complete repertory of facts

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connected with the Grail tradition, unfolds to the esquires the nature of the king's wound, the sorceries of Klingsor, the hope of deliverance from some unknown "guileless one," a sudden cry breaks up the situation.

376. GURNEMANZ'S NARRATIVE.

A white swan, pierced by an arrow, flutters dying to the ground. It is the swan beloved of the Grail brotherhood, bird of fair omen, symbol of spotless purity. The slayer is brought in between two knights—a stalwart youth, fearless, unabashed—whilst the death-music of the swan, the slow distilling and stiffening of its life-blood, is marvellously rendered by the orchestra. Conviction of his fault comes over the youth as he listens to the reproaches of Gurnemanz. He hangs his head, ashamed and penitent, and at last with a sudden passion of remorse snaps his bow, and flings it aside. The swan is borne off, and Parsifal (the "guileless one," for he it is), with Gurnemanz and Kundry—who rouses herself and surveys Parsifal with strange, almost savage curiosity—hold the stage.

In this scene Kundry tells the youth more than he cares to hear about himself. How his father, Gamuret, was a great knight killed in battle; how his mother, Herzeleide (Heart's Affliction), fearing a like fate for her son, brought him up in the lonely forest; how he left her to follow a troop of knights that he met one

377. KUNDRY'S NARRATIVE.

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day winding through the forest glade, and being led on and on in pursuit of them, never overtook them and never returned to his mother, Heart's Affliction, who died of grief. At this point the frantic youth seizes Kundry by the throat in an agony of rage and grief, but is held back by Gurnemanz, till, worn out by the violence of his emotion, he faints away, and is gradually revived by Kundry and Gurnemanz.

Suddenly Kundry rises with a wild look, like one under a spell. Her mood of service is over. She staggers across the stage—she can hardly keep awake. "Sleep," she mutters, "I must sleep—sleep!" and falls down in one of those long trances which apparently lasted for months, or years, and formed the transition periods between her mood of Grail service and the Klingsor slavery into which she must next relapse in spite of herself.

378. KUNDRY'S SLEEP.

And is this the guileless one? This wild youth who slays the fair swan—who knows not his own name nor whence he comes, nor whither he goes, nor what are his destinies? The old knight eyes him curiously —he will put him to the test. This youth had seen the king pass once—he had marked his pain. Was he "enlightened by pity?" Is he the appointed deliverer? The old knight now invites him to the shrine of the Grail.

379. PASSAGE TO MONTSALVAT.

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"What is the Grail?" asks the youth. Truly a guileless, innocent one! yet a brave and pure knight, since he has known no evil, and so readily repents of a fault committed in ignorance.

Gurnemanz is strangely drawn to him. He shall see the Grail, and in the Holy Palace, what time the mystic light streams forth and the assembled knights bow themselves in prayer, the voice which comforted Amfortis shall speak to his deliverer and bid him arise and heal the king.

. . . . .

Gurnemanz and Parsifal have ceased to speak. They stand in the glowing light of the summer-land. The tide of music rolls on continuously, but sounds more strange and dreamy.

. . . . .

Is it a cloud passing over the sky? There seems to be a shuddering in the branches—the light fades upon yonder sunny woodlands—the foreground darkens apace. The whole scene is moving, but so slowly that it seems to change like a dissolving view. I see the two figures of Gurnemanz and Parsifal moving through the trees—they are lost behind yonder rock. They emerge further off—higher up. The air grows very dim; the orchestra peals louder and louder. I lose the two in the deepening twilight. The forest is changing, the land is wild and mountainous. Huge galleries and arcades, rock-hewn, loom through the dim forest; but all is growing dark. I listen to the murmurs of the

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"Grail," the "Spear," the "Pain," the "Love and Faith" motives—hollow murmurs, confused, floating out of the depths of lonely caves. Then I have a feeling of void and darkness, and there comes a sighing as of a soul swooning away in a trance, and a vision of waste places and wild caverns; and then through the confused dream I hear the solemn boom of mighty bells, only muffled. They keep time as to some ghostly march. I strain my eyes into the thick gloom before me. Is it a rock, or forest, or palace?

As the light returns slowly, a hall of more than Alhambra-like splendour opens before me. My eyes are riveted on the shining pillars of variegated marble, the tesselated pavements, the vaulted roof glowing with gold and colour; beyond, arcades of agate columns, bathed in a misty moonlight air, and lost in a bewildering perspective of halls and corridors.

380. THE HALL OF THE KNIGHTS.

I hear the falling of distant water in marble fonts; the large bells of Montsalvat peal louder and louder, and to music of unimaginable stateliness the knights enter in solemn procession, clad in the blue and red robes of the Grail, and take their seats at two semicircular tables which start like arms to the right and left of the holy shrine. Beneath it lies Titurel entranced, and upon it is presently deposited the sacred treasure of the Grail itself.

As the wounded King Amfortis is borne in, the assembled

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knights, each standing in his place, a golden cup before him, intone the Grail motive, which is taken up by the entering choruses of servitors and esquires bearing the holy relics.

381. THE HOLY GRAIL.

Gurnemanz is seated amongst the knights; Parsifal stands aside and looks on in mute astonishment, "a guileless one."

As the Holy Grail is set down on the altar before the wounded king, a burst of heavenly music streams from the high dome—voices of angels intone the celestial phrases, "*Take, eat*" and "*this is my blood!*" and blend them with the "faith and love" motives. As the choruses die away, the voice of the entranced Titurel is heard from beneath the altar calling upon Amfortis, his son, to uncover the Grail that he may find refreshment and life in the blessed vision.

Then follows a terrible struggle in the breast of Amfortis. *He*, sore stricken in sin, yet guardian of the Grail, guilty among the guiltless, oppressed with pain, bowed down with shame, craving for restoration, o'erwhelmed with unworthiness, yet chosen to stand and minister before the Lord on behalf of His saints! Pathetic situation, which must in all times repeat itself in the history of the Church. The unworthiness of the minister affects not the validity of his consecrated acts. Yet what agony of mind must many a priest have suffered, himself oppressed with sin and doubt, whilst dispensing the means of grace, and acting as a minister and steward of the mysteries.

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The marvellous piece of self-analysis in which the conscience-stricken king bewails his lot, as little admits of description here as the music which embodies his emotions.

At the close of it angel voices seem floating in mid-air, sighing the mystic words:

"Durch mitleid Wissend
Der reine Thor,
Harre sein,
Den ich erkor."

"Wait for my chosen one,
Guileless and innocent,
Pity-enlightened."

And immediately afterwards the voice of Titurel, like one turning restlessly in his sleep, comes up from his living tomb beneath the altar, "*Uncover the Grail!*"

With trembling hands the sick king raises himself, and with a great effort staggers towards the shrine—the covering is removed—he takes the crystal cup—he raises it on high—the blood is dark—the light begins to fade in the hall—a mist and dimness come over the scene—we seem to be assisting at a shadowy ceremony in a dream—the big bells are tolling—the heavenly choirs from above the dome, which is now bathed in twilight, are heard: "*Drink ye all of this!*" Amfortis raises on high the crystal vase—the knights fall on their knees in prayer. Suddenly a faint tremor of light quivers in the crystal cup—then the blood grows ruby red for a moment. Amfortis waves it to and fro—the knights gaze

382. THIS IS MY BLOOD.

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in ecstatic adoration. Titurel's voice gathers strength in his tomb:

"Celestial rapture!
How streams the light upon the face of God!"

The light fades slowly out of the crystal cup—the miracle is accomplished. The blood again grows dark—the light of common day returns to the halls of Montsalvat, and the knights resume their seats, to find each one his golden goblet filled with wine.

During the sacred repast which follows the brotherhood join hands and embrace, singing:

"Blessed are they that believe;
Blessed are they that love!"

and the refrain is heard again far up in the heights, re-echoed by the angelic hosts.

. . . . .

I looked round upon the silent audience whilst these astonishing scenes were passing before me; the whole assembly was motionless — all seemed to be solemnised by the august spectacle — seemed almost to share in the devout contemplation and trance-like worship of the holy knights. Every thought of the stage had vanished—nothing was further from my own thoughts than play-acting. I was sitting as I should sit at an oratorio, in devout and rapt contemplation. Before my eyes had passed a symbolic vision of prayer and ecstacy,

383. THE SPIRITUAL IMPRESSION MADE.

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flooding the soul with overpowering thoughts of the Divine sacrifice and the mystery of unfathomable love.

. . . . . .

The hall of Montsalvat empties. Gurnemanz strides excitedly up to Parsifal, who stands stupefied with what he has seen—

> "Why standest thou silent?
> Knowest thou what thine eyes have seen?"

The guileless one shakes his head. "Nothing but a fool!" exclaims Gurnemanz, angrily; and seizing Parsifal by the shoulder, he pushes him roughly out of the hall, with:

> "Be off! look after thy geese,
> And henceforth leave our swans in peace."

The Grail vision had, then, taught the "guileless one" nothing. He could not see his mission—he was as yet unawakened to the deeper life of the spirit; though blameless and unsullied, he was still the "natural man." Profound truth! that was not first which was spiritual, but that which was natural: before Parsifal wins a spiritual triumph, he must be spiritually tried; his inner life must be deepened and developed, else he can never read aright the message of the Grail.

384. THE MEANING OF THE GUILELESS FOOL.

The life of God in the spirit comes only when the battle for God in the heart has been fought and won.

Fare forth, thou guileless one! thou shalt yet add to the simplicity of the dove the wisdom of the serpent. Thou art

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innocent because ignorant; but thou shalt be weighed anon in the balance and not be found wanting: and then shalt thou re-conquer the holy spear lost in Sin, re-won in Purity and Sacrifice, and be to the frail Amfortis the chosen saviour for whom he waits.

. . . . . .

The foregoing events occupied about an hour and a quarter. When the curtain fell, the vast audience broke up in silence.

The air outside was cool and balmy. In the distance lay the city of Bayreuth, with the tower of the Alte Schloss and the old church standing up grey against the distant Bavarian hills.

All around us lay the pine woods, broken by the lawns and avenues that encircle the theatre and embower it in a secluded world of its own—even as the Palace of the Grail was shut off from the profane world.

Here, indeed, is truly the Montsalvat of the modern drama—a spot purified and sacred to the highest aims and noblest manifestations of Art.

In about an hour the Spear motive was the signal blown on the wind instruments outside, and I took my seat for the second act.

Act II.

A restless, passion-tossed prelude. The "Grail" subject distorted, the "Spear" motive thrust in discordant, the

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"Faith and love" theme fluttering like a wounded dove in pain, fierce bursts of passion, wild shocks of uncontrolled misery, mingling with the "carnal joy" music of Klingsor's magic garden and the shuddering might of his alchemy.

385. KLINGSOR PRELUDE.

The great magician, Klingsor, is seen alone in his dungeon palace—harsh contrast to the gorgeous halls of Montsalvat. Here all is built of the live rock, an impenetrable fastness, the home of devilish might and terrible spells.

Klingsor is aware of the coming struggle, and he means to be ready for it. He owns the sacred spear wrested from Amfortis; he even aspires to win the Grail; he knows the "guileless one" is on his way to wrest that spear from him. His only hope is in paralysing the fool by his enchantments as he paralysed Amfortis, and the same woman will serve his turn.

386. APPARITION OF KUNDRY.

"Kundry!" The time is come, the spells are woven—blue vapours rise, and in the midst of the blue vapours, the figure of the still sleeping Kundry is seen. She wakes, trembling violently; she knows she is again under the spell she abhors—the spell to do evil, the mission to corrupt. With a shuddering scream she stands before her tormentor, denying his power, loathing to return to her vile mission, yet returning, as with a bitter cry she vanishes from his presence.

Parsifal has invaded Klingsor's realm; the evil knights

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have fled before his prowess, wounded and in disorder. Kundry is commissioned to meet the guileless youth in the enchanted garden and, all other allurements failing, to subdue him by her irresistible fascinations and hand him over to Klingsor.

387. GARDEN OF GIRLS.

In a moment the scenery lifts, and a garden of marvellous beauty and extent lies before us. The flowers are all of colossal dimensions—huge roses hang in tangled festoons, the cactus, the lily, the blue-bell, creepers and orchids of enormous size and dazzling colour wave in mid-air, and climb the aromatic trees.

On a bright hill appears Parsifal, standing bewildered by the light and loveliness around him. Beautiful girls, dressed like flowers, and hardly distinguishable from them at first, rush in, bewailing their wounded and disabled knights; but on seeing Parsifal, fall upon their new prey, and surrounding him, sing verse after verse of the loveliest ballet music, whilst trying to embrace him, and quarrelling with each other for the privilege.

About that wonderful chorus of flower-girls there was just a suggestive touch of the Rhine maidens' singing. It belonged to the same school of thought and feeling, but was freer, wilder—more considerable, and altogether more complex and wonderful in its changes and in the marvellous confusion in which it breaks up.

The guileless one resists these charmers, and they are

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just about to leave him in disgust, when the roses lift on one side, and, stretched on a mossy bank overhung with flowers, appears a woman of unearthly loveliness. It is Kundry transformed, and in the marvellous duet which follows between her and Parsifal, a perfectly new and original type of love duet is struck out—an analysis of character, unique in musical drama—a combination of sentiment and a situation absolutely novel, which could only have been conceived and carried out by a creative genius of the highest order.

388. THE NEW LOVE DUET. AN ANALYSIS.

First, I note that the once spell-bound Kundry is devoted utterly to her task of winning Parsifal, into this she throws all the intensity of her wild and desperate nature, but in turn she is strangely affected by the spiritual atmosphere of the "guileless one"—a feeling comes over her in the midst of her witchcraft passion, that he is in some way to be her saviour too; yet, woman-like, she conceives of her salvation as possible only in union with him. Yet was this the very crime to which Klingsor would drive her for the ruin of Parsifal. Strange confusion of thought, feeling, aspiration, longing!—struggle of irreconcileable elements! How shall she reconcile them? Her intuition fails her not, and her tact triumphs. She will win by stealing his love through his mother's love. A mother's love is holy—that love she tells him of—it can never more be his—but she

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will replace it—her passion shall be sanctified by it—through *that* passion she has sinned, through it she, too, shall be redeemed. She will work out her own salvation by the very spells that are upon her for evil. He is pure—he shall make her pure, could she but win him—both, by the might of such pure love, would surely be delivered from Klingsor the corrupter, the tormentor. Fatuous dream! How, through corruption, win incorruption? How, through indulgence, win peace and freedom from desire? It is the old cheat of the senses—Satan appears as an angel of light. The thought deludes the unhappy Kundry herself—she is no longer consciously working for Klingsor, she really believes that this new turn, this bias given to passion, will purify both her and the guileless, pure fool she seeks to subdue.

Nothing can describe the subtlety of their long interview; the surprising turns of sentiment and contrasts of feeling. Throughout this scene Parsifal's instinct is absolutely true and sure. Everything Kundry says about his mother, Herzeleide, he feels; but every attempt to make him accept her instead he resists. Her desperate declamation is splendid. Her heartrending sense of misery and piteous prayer for salvation, her belief that before her is her saviour could she but win him to her will, the choking fury of baffled passion, the steady and subtle encroachments made whilst Parsifal is lost in a meditative dream, the burning kiss which recalls him to himself, the fine touch

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by which this kiss, whilst arousing in him the stormiest feelings, causes a sharp pain, as of Amfortis' own wound, piercing his very heart. All this is realistic if you will, but it is realism raised to the sublime.

389. KUNDRY BAFFLED.

Suddenly Parsifal springs up, hurls the enchantress from him, will forth from Klingsor's realm. She is baffled, she knows it; for a moment she bars his passage, then succumbs; the might of sensuality which lost Amfortis the sacred spear, has been met and defeated by the guileless fool. He has passed from innocence to knowledge in his interview with the flower-girt girls, in his long converse with Kundry, in her insidious embrace, in her kiss; but, all these are now thrust aside, he steps forth still unconquered, still "guileless," but no more "a fool." The knowledge of good and evil has come, but the struggle is already passed.

"Yes, sinner, I do offer thee Redemption," he can say to Kundry; "not in thy way, but in thy Lord Christ's way of sacrifice!"

But the desperate creature, wild with passion, will listen to no reason; she shouts aloud to her master, and Klingsor suddenly appears, poising the sacred spear. In another moment he hurls it right across the enchanted garden at Parsifal. It cannot wound the guileless and pure one as it wounded the sinful Amfortis. A miracle! It hangs arrested in the air above Parsifal's head; he seizes it—it is the

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sacred talisman, one touch of which will heal even as it inflicted the king's deadly wound.

With a mighty cry and the shock as of an earthquake, the castle of Klingsor falls shattered to pieces, the garden withers up to a desert, the girls, who have rushed in, lie about amongst the fading flowers, themselves withered up and dead. Kundry sinks down in a deathly swoon, whilst Parsifal steps over a ruined wall and disappears, saluting her with the words: "Thou alone knowest when we shall meet again!"

. . . . .

390. SOLEMN THOUGHTS.

The long shadows were stealing over the hills when I came out at the second pause. Those whom I met and conversed with were subdued and awed. What a solemn tragedy of human passion we had been assisting at! Not a heart there but could interpret that struggle between the flesh and the spirit from its own experiences. Not one but knew the desperately wicked and deceitful temptations that come like enchantresses in the wizard's garden, to plead the cause of the devil in the language of high-flown sentiment or even religious feeling.

Praise and criticism seemed dumb; we rather walked and spoke of what we had just witnessed like men convinced of judgment, and righteousness, and sin. It was a strange mood in which to come out of a theatre after witnessing what would commonly be called an "Opera."

I felt more than ever the impossibility of producing the

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Parsifal in London, at Drury Lane or Covent Garden, before a well-dressed company of loungers, who had well dined, and were on their way to balls and suppers afterwards.

I would as soon see the Oberammergau play at a music hall.

No; in *Parsifal* all is solemn, or all is irreverent. At Bayreuth we came on a pilgrimage; it cost us time, and trouble, and money; we were in earnest—so were the actors; the spirit of the great master who had planned every detail seemed still to preside over all; the actors lived in their parts; not a thought of self remained; no one accepted applause or recall; no one aimed at producing a personal effect; the actors were lost in the drama, and it was the drama and not the actors which had impressed and solemnised us. When I came out they asked who was Amfortis? I did not know. I said "the wounded king."

As the instruments played out the Faith and Love motive for us to re-enter, the mellow sunshine broke once more from the cloud-rack over city, and field, and forest, before sinking behind the long low range of the distant hills.

Act III.

391. PRELUDE OF THE YEARS.

The opening prelude to the third and last act seems to warn me of the lapse of time. The music is full of pain and restlessness—the pain of wretched years of long waiting for a deliverer, who comes not; the restlessness and misery of a hope deferred, the

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weariness of a life without a single joy. The motives, discoloured as it were by grief, work up to a distorted version of the Grail subject, which breaks off as with a cry of despair.

Is the Grail, too, then turned into a mocking spirit to the unhappy Amfortis?

Relief comes to us with the lovely scene upon which the curtain rises. Again the wide summer land lies stretching away over sunlit moor and woodland. In the foreground wave the forest trees, and I hear the ripple of the woodland streams. Invariably throughout the drama, in the midst of all human pain and passion, great nature is there, peaceful, harmonious in all her loveliest moods; a paradise in which dwell souls who make of her their own purgatory.

392. THE SUMMER LAND.

In yonder aged figure, clad in the Grail pilgrim robe, I discern Gurnemanz; his hair is white; he stoops with years; a rude hut is hard by. Presently a groan arrests his attention, moaning as of a human thing in distress. He clears away some brushwood, and beneath it finds, waking from her long trance, the strange figure of Kundry. For how many years has she slept, we know not. Why is she now recalled to life? She staggers to her feet; we see that she too is in a pilgrim garb, with a rope girding her dress of coarse brown serge.

393. WAKING OF KUNDRY.

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"Service! service!" she mutters, and seizing a pitcher, moves mechanically to fill it at the well, then totters but half awake into the wooden hut. The forest music breaks forth—the hum of happy insect life, the song of wild birds. All seems to pass as in a vision; when suddenly enters a knight clad in black armour from top to toe.

The two eye him curiously, and Gurnemanz, approaching, bids him lay aside his armour and his weapons. He carries a long spear. In silence the knight unhelms,

394. THE BLACK KNIGHT.

and sticking the spear into the ground, kneels before it, and remains lost in devotional contemplation. The "Spear" and "Grail" motives mingle together in the full tide of orchestral sounds carrying on the emotional undercurrent of the drama. The knight is soon recognised by both as the long-lost and discarded Parsifal.

The "guileless one" has learned wisdom, and discovered his mission—he knows now that he bears the spear which is to heal the king's grievous wound, and that he himself is appointed his successor. Through long strife and trial and pain he seems to have grown into something of Christ's own likeness. Not all at once, but at last he has found the path. He returns to bear salvation and pardon both to Kundry and the wretched king, Amfortis.

The full music flows on whilst Gurnemanz relates how the knights have all grown weak and aged, deprived of the

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vision and sustenance of the Holy Grail, whilst the long-entranced Titurel is at last dead.

At this news Parsifal, overcome with grief, swoons away, and Gurnemanz and Kundry loosen his armour, and sprinkle him with water from the holy spring. Underneath his black suit of mail he appears clad in a long white tunic.

395. A SACRED PICTURE.

The grouping is here admirable; Gurnemanz is in the Templar's red and blue robe; Parsifal in white, his auburn hair parted in front, and flowing down in ringlets on either side, recalls Leonardo's favourite conception of the Saviour's head, and, indeed, from this point Parsifal becomes a kind of symbolic reflection of the Lord Himself. Kundry, subdued and awed, lies weeping at his feet; he lifts his hands to bless her with infinite pity. She washes his feet, and dries them with the hairs of her head. It is a bold stroke, but the voices of nature, the murmur of the summer woods, come with an infinite healing tenderness and pity, and the act is seen to be symbolical of the pure devotion of a sinful creature redeemed from sin. Peace has at last entered into that wild and troubled heart, and restless Kundry, delivered from Klingsor's spell, receives the sprinkling of baptismal water at the hands of Parsifal.

. . . . .

The great spaces of silence in the dialogue, broken now by a few sentences from Parsifal, now from Gurnemanz, are more eloquent than many words. The tidal music flows

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on in a ceaseless stream of changing harmonies, returning constantly to the sweet and slumbrous sound of the summer land, full of teeming life and glowing happiness.

Then Gurnemanz takes up his parable. It is the Blessed Good Friday on which our dear Lords uffered. The Love and Faith phrases are chimed forth, the pain-notes of the Cross agony are sounded and pass, the Grail motive seems to swoon away in descending harmonies, sinking into the woodland voices of universal nature—that trespass-pardoned nature that now seems waking to the day of her glory and innocence.

In that solemn moment Parsifal bends over the subdued and humbled Kundry, and kisses her softly on the brow—

396. THE KISS OF PEACE.

her wild kiss in the garden had kindled in him fierce fire, mingled with the bitter wound-pain; *his* is the seal of her eternal pardon and peace.

In the distance the great bells of Montsalvat are now heard booming solemnly—the air darkens, the light fades out, the slow motion of all the scenery recommences. Again I hear the wild cave music, strange and hollow sounding—the three move on as in a dream, and are soon lost in the deep shadows; and through all, louder and louder, boom the heavy bells of Montsalvat, until the stage brightens, and we find ourselves once more in the vast Alhambra-like hall of the knights.

For the last time Amfortis is borne in, and the brother-

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hood of the Grail form the procession bearing the sacred relics, which are deposited before him.

The king, in great agony and despair, bewails the death of his father and his own backsliding. With failing but desperate energy he harangues the assembled knights, and, tottering forward, beseeches them to free him from his misery and sin-stained life, and thrust their swords deep into his wounded side. At this moment Gurnemanz, accompanied by Parsifal and Kundry, enter. Parsifal steps forward with the sacred spear, now at length to be restored to the knights. He touches the side of Amfortis, the wound is healed, and as he raises the spear on high the point is seen, glowing with the crimson glory of the Grail. Then stepping up to the shrine, Parsifal takes the crystal cup, the dark blood glows bright crimson as he holds it on high, and at that moment, whilst all fall on their knees, and celestial music ("Drink ye all of this") floats in the upper air, Kundry falls back dying, her eyes fixed on the blessed Grail. A white dove descends and hovers for a moment, poised in mid-air above the glowing cup. A soft chorus of angels seems to die away in the clouds beyond the golden dome—

397. AMFORTIS IS HEALED.

"Marvellous mercy!
Victorious Saviour!"

. . . . . .

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Words can add nothing to the completeness of the drama, and no words can give any idea of the splendour and complexity of that sound ocean upon which the drama floats from beginning to end.

The enemies of the Grail are destroyed or subdued, the wound they have inflicted is healed, the prey they claimed is rescued; the pure and blameless Parsifal becomes the consecrated head of the holy brotherhood, and the beatific vision of God's eternal love and Real Presence is restored to the Knights of the Sangrail.

. . . . . .

When I came out of the theatre at the end of the third and last act, it was ten o'clock.

The wind was stirring in the fir trees, the stars gleamed out fitfully through a sky, across which the clouds were hurrying wildly, but the moon rose low and large beyond the shadowy hills, and bathed the misty valleys with a mild and golden radiance as of some celestial dawn.

. . . . . .

398. A TOUCHING INCIDENT.

When the curtain fell on the last performance of *Parsifal*, at Bayreuth, which, on the 30th July 1883, brought the celebration month to a close, the enthusiasm of the audience found full vent in applause. The curtain was once lifted, but no calls would induce the performers to appear a second time or receive any individual homage. This is entirely in accordance with the tone of these exceptional representations. On each

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occasion the only applause permitted was at the end of the drama, and throughout not a single actor answered to a call or received any personal tribute.

Behind the scenes there occurred a touching incident. The Banker GROSS led WAGNER'S children up to the assembled actors, and in the name of their dead father thanked the assembly for the care and labour of love expended by each and all in producing the last work of the great dead master. SIEGFRIED, WAGNER'S son, thirteen years old, then, in a few simple words, stifled with sobs, thanked the actors personally, and all the children shook hands with them. The KING OF BAVARIA charged himself upon WAGNER'S death with the education of his son.

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V.

INTERLUDE

ON BAYREUTH CITY.

(A Leaf from my Diary.)

WAGNER has invested Bayreuth with so modern an interest that we are apt to forget that it has had a past; but once walk through it, and the old Markgrave days of the great prince-nobles who owned the town and country round, handing over both to their heirs, come back to us; and here and there a stone relic reminds us of a different sort of world from ours—a world of Hohenzollern and Hohenstaufen, and wars and fightings; aye, and of plague, pestilence, and famine too. That grim warrior prince, armed cap-à-pie, who prances yonder on his stone horse, with an inconvenient quantity of harness on, in front of the New Palace; those vigorous figures riding ancient stone steeds, now half-shattered, at each corner of the fountain—why cannot we make such

399. PAST AND PRESENT.

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statues now? Because we don't love hard-fighting—hand to hand. We are not always at it—thinking about it. We shoot the foe two miles off, and carry on war by telegraph. We do not look up to our great nobles or our royal folk because they lead us to battle and fortify the ramparts of our towns; but because they take the chair at public dinners, open hospitals, and encourage music, painting, and the arts of peace. Well, I am content; but there was grit in the old days, for all that.

The annals of Bayreuth go back beyond the eleventh century, and it has had a chequered, though at times glorious career. In 1228, on the death of the last DUKE OTTO II., it was held by PRINCE FREDERICK, together with Nuremberg; and under his successors, who lived here half the year, it reached its golden period. All this must be taken on trust, for of that early period there is nothing left but a few crumbling stones. Fire and plague have dealt very terribly with Bayreuth. In 1430 most of the place—built chiefly of wood—was burnt down. Rebuilt in 1472, it had attained in 1580 to a population of only 1,907; but its increase, in spite of the great sack and slaughter in the days of WALLENSTEIN, was so rapid that in 1634 the plague was able to carry off 2,000 persons, and still leave a goodly population. Since then the plague has ravaged the town no less than five times; 144 houses were burnt down in

400. THE PLAGUE.

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1634, and almost the whole town was in flames as late as 1621.

401. MODERN BAYREUTH.

The present Bayreuth dates chiefly from 1655. It is to the Brandenburg Princes who lived here that we owe those palaces and goodly houses, carved stone relics, fountains, and decayed splendours that arrest the eye as you stroll through the Friedrich, Maximilian, or Ludwig streets. The Opera House was built by PRINCE FREDERICK, the husband of the gifted sister of FREDERICK THE GREAT, SOPHIA WILHELMINE, and that lady's ideas of taste and magnificence have been fully carried out. The place is a Renaissance gem. The carved wooden balustrades of the staircase, the gorgeous fittings of the old-fashioned boxes, as they rise in three tiers, the heavy gilding and excessive ornamentation of wreath and canopy over the Royal box, produce a sumptuously impressive effect, and tell of that sort of reckless and lavish expenditure which went on in France in LOUIS the XIV.'s and XV.'s days, and ended in bringing down the tinsel fabric of the old French Monarchy. I suppose FREDERICK THE GREAT could not prevent his relatives from imitating the French opera splendour; and then we all know he was musical, and played the flute himself well enough—for a Prince.

The stage boasts of being the largest in Germany. Per-

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haps this, amongst other reasons, induced WAGNER to select Bayreuth as the place where he resolved to deal the old operatic system its death-blow by erecting his new Shrine and Palace of Art sacred to the Musical Drama, but, significantly, outside the city. Since the burning of the Vienna house, the Bayreuth Opera has been closed, the exits being thought inadequate, as indeed they are. When the next fire comes, should it attack the old Opera House, the thing will blaze like tinder. Everyone is exhorted to visit this costly building, but when they get in they find it all pitch dark. A bright light from the bottom of the stage, indeed, streams in, but that only aggravates matters. Stand with your back to it, facing the Royal box, and in a few minutes the gorgeous rows of carved boxes, the heavy golden candelabra and the rich faded velvets, will become visible, and you will be rewarded. The house holds about 1,000 people.

402. THE OLD OPERA HOUSE.

I have said that in times past this favoured city has five times been visited by the plague; it now boasts of being one of the healthiest places in Bavaria. It ought to be. It is deliciously situated amidst flowing streams and pine woods; it is 1,060 feet above the sea level, and surrounded by mountains; it has a population of 22,077, and the people, whilst dying at the rate of 24 per annum to the 1,000, increase at the rate of 30, thus gaining annually six on every

403. SMELLS OF THE CITY.

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1,000. This may be all true and edifying, I allow, but the smells (whether or not they have anything to do with the plague I don't know) are simply awful. As I walked along the street, I thought I would stand opposite some shop and just glance at my guide-book, but I would take care to select one where there was no smell. I could not find one; open gratings and gutters poured forth their heavy effluvia wherever I paused. They tell us now this is so much more healthy than the new trapped drain. I hope so, because it is so much more unpleasant. I should not wonder if a new visitation of the old plague came ere long to upset this new theory of the blessed sanity of effluvia.

404. ENTERPRIZE OF BAYREUTHERS.

I read in my book, however, that the Bayreuthers are anxious to alleviate the sick and dying, as well as to educate the young and healthy. Not only have they a famous public school, where Jews, Turks, infidels, heretics, and Christians are indiscriminately taught, but they have endless "corpse" societies—or burial clubs—and hospitals for special classes, all which are described in words of such prodigious length that my own poor eloquence withers up as I read them. For instance, a special infirmary for stone-masons and bricklayers is termed a "Kranken-und Unterstützungsverein" for "Männer-und Steinhauergesellen."

After a walk down the principal streets I thought I

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would get to a "platz," or open space, and try and breathe the "Himlische Luft," of which GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN speaks; so I made for JEAN PAUL RICHTER'S statue, in black bronze. The good man was put up there in 1841, having died in 1825. That is sooner than we build the sepulchres of some of our prophets. LUDWIG, "Duke of Franks" and the King of Bavaria, set him up. I do not know who was the artist—not a Canova, certainly. His head is kindly and commonplace; he wears a flower—which looks like a penny flower—in his button-hole; he holds a pencil in one hand and a pocket-book in the other. He is waiting for an idea! As he has been waiting exactly forty-two years in all sorts of weather, the idea will probably never come to him now. It is painful to think that JEAN PAUL—who never in his life waited a moment for a thought—should be doomed by a heartless sculptor to dawdle on in unpicturesque expectancy and a frock coat, perhaps for centuries longer! I really wonder this did not occur to the artist.

405. JEAN PAUL WAITS.

On the whole, I like the Bayreuth people. The barbers overcharge, the hotel-keepers give you 9.50 marks instead of ten marks for a gold half-sovereign, because they will declare it is "worn"; and the children wear no stockings. The priests, with full choir, stop and sing hymns in the streets when they bring out their dead for burial; and the publicans plant the *cafés* amid thick pine-trees, all stuck in

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like a real forest, only *rootless*. The beer—— But I fear my information may become too voluminous.

As I sit and write high up in a spacious room of the old Castle, my windows open, I can look over the sleeping city; and by the faint moonlight I think I can just make out the Wagner Theatre, on a hill beyond the town. It is long past midnight. The clocks have been striking what I believe to be half-past two, although it might just as well mean four o'clock. The night is very still; even the "Vaterland" chorus in the "bier-garten" has left off at last. The *Ring of the Nibelungs—Rheingold, Walküre, Siegfried, and Götterdämmerung*—lies open before me; to-morrow afternoon I shall see the *Rheingold*.

VI.

THE NIBELUNG'S RING.

I.—Rheingold.

THE heat at Bayreuth (August 1876) was intense. The EMPEROR OF GERMANY, who attended some of the performances, expressed his astonishment at the endurance of the orchestra, who had to work by a great power of gas—sunk in a pit beneath the stage.

406. THE HEAT IN 1876.

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"I should just like," said his Imperial Majesty, "to go down below and see where my Kapellmeister RICHTER sweats"—and he went.

Notwithstanding the excessively sultry weather, a vast company of Art Pilgrims ascended the hill outside the city, and took their seats nearly every day in WAGNER'S theatre for a month.

Let the reader become with me in imagination one of those pilgrims. If I cannot make the sound of WAGNER'S music ring in his ears, I will try and make a vision of the first Wagner Festival pass before his eyes. As I contemplate Bayreuth, in that same month of August 1876, I perceive the whole city to be given over to a kind of idolatry of WAGNER. The King appears at times to wave incense before him. LISZT, in some degree, shares the homage. With his venerable white head, he looks like an ancient magician, but with an eye that can still flash fire, and a commanding carriage. The town is hung with wreaths and flags; in the shops nothing but WAGNER portraits, busts, medals of all sorts and sizes, WAGNER'S works, WAGNER'S Life and Genius, and an immense German and French literature on the Niebelungen Saga.

407. WAGNER WORSHIP.

The performance of the *Rheingold* will live long in my memory, as the extreme realisation of weird beauty steeped

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in atmosphere such as may be in some other planet, flushed with sunset or moonrise. This music is like a land of dreams, into which the spirit breaks at times, and, hurrying back a million of years, discovers, on the surface of far-off seas, or dim caverns, the light that has long since gone out for ever. The elemental prelude of deep and slumbrous sound wafts us away from all account of time and space of the present. The vast hall, full of silent human beings, has been touched by the magician's wand. All grows dark, and the dim grey-green depths of the Rhine alone become visible. We strain our eyes into the dimness, and are aware of the deep moving of the Rhine water. The three Rhine daughters grow visible, swimming midwater, swimming and singing, guardians of the Rheingold. What unearthly, unhuman, magical, snatches of sweetest song! There is at last realized the creature of legend, the Undine at once more and less than human.

408. THE RHINE GIRLS.

The hideous King of the Undergrounds, or Niebelungen, sits watching these lovely water-maidens—he courts them in vain. The orchestra weaves on its divine Rhine music, without which we almost feel the scene must vanish. The soft cries and unearthly but musical laughter of the Undines, swimming ceaselessly, begin to give us a strange feeling of limited, monotonous life, pointing subtilly to the difference between such natures

409. RHEINGOLD!

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and our own. But they, too, are waiting for something. This dim green water is growing oppressive. We feel ourselves immersed in its depths. At first it was a dream scene of exquisite beauty—now it is almost a prison—in another moment we should struggle to be free, but suddenly the *Rheingold* begins to brighten. A shaft of radiance strikes through the water. The Undines scream with joy. The Underground King, Alberich, blinks with astonishment. Then through the whole depth of the Rhine streams an electric light—glowing upon a distant rock—dimmed to softest yellow only by the water. "Rheingold! Rheingold!" a wild shout arises—joy of the Rhine daughters! HAYDN has produced the effect of light in the *Creation* by a great burst of sound, "And there was LIGHT!!" But, sublime as is that one chord on LIGHT, the effect here is far more subtle. We have been kept in dark water for half an hour. The whole system is made to pine and cry out for light. It comes at last—the light of the flashing of the Rheingold! Every fibre in the body quivers with it. It is as oxygen to the lungs. The eye and whole nervous system drink it in. We could shout like children with the Rhine girls over the joy of the Rheingold!

410. SUBTLE ART.

The whole of this water-scene is of indescribable beauty, and without a trace of vulgar pantomimic effect. A lesser man would have made the Rhine water lighter at first. As it is, for some seconds after

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the curtain rises we can hardly see anything. Slowly the eye discerns the floating women; but we still follow them chiefly by their voices. Alberich is hardly visible; the music itself seems to keep down the light; but then the dawn of splendour of the Rheingold! That explains all; the effect is consummate. WAGNER, it is evident, has superintended every detail and every *nuance*. I can understand now his bursting into tears when the Rhine ladies refused to enter the new invisible machines which were to float them about in mid-water.

I will here briefly allude to the plot of the *Rheingold*. How Alberich, the King of the Undergrounds, renounces the love of the Rhine girls to clutch the gold.

411. PLOT.

How he leaves the Rhine dark, and flies with his treasure to his own Underground caverns, there to maltreat his wretched hordes of slaves, and compel them to turn the Rheingold into sumptuous vessels, amongst them a magic helmet and a Ring whose wearer can change himself at will into anything. How the gods meanwhile have been bribing the giants with the promise of the beautiful Freia, their sister, to build them their Walhalla Palace. How the giants on the completion of the palace claim Freia, and only give her up upon the gods extorting the Rheingold from Alberich and his undergrounds and paying it over to the monstrous architects. How at last the gods, with Freia, go over the Rainbow Bridge into the Walhalla to the sound of

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heavenly music, whilst upon the ambrosial air comes from afar the fitful wail of the Rhine Daughters :—

"Rheingold!
Clear and pure,
Show thy glory in the depths,
There alone is Truth and Trust,
False and faithless all above,
Who rejoice . . . . . !"

All this the reader may possibly be familiar with. To dwell upon each scene is here impossible. I wish to notice the first employment of what I have called, in *Music and Morals* the Colour Art of the Future. The eye is prepared for the lurid and horrible interior of the Niebelungen Caves, where the scourged slaves ply, amid shrieks, the ceaseless hammer—by white clouds of steam shot with red light. This is used, with varying intensities, to never pausing music, simply as a sensuous appeal to the eye, and its effect is a pyschological marvel. All the burden of horror and pain is in the surging, hissing, crimson cloud. It is the terrible bridge over which the spectator passes to the realm of Niebelheim, as the gods pass to Walhalla over the rainbow. Steam or any other medium, shot with changing colour, and perhaps accompanied by music—the Colour Symphony—is still to come; its raw elements are present in the sunset, as the raw elements of music are in the sounds of nature, and the cries of birds and beasts. Wagner has perhaps unconsciously flashed the first line of the new Art upon us in the *Rheingold*.

412. THE COLOUR ART.

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Of the spiritual beauty of the "Rainbow scene," which is, pictorially, worthy of TURNER, I can hardly speak. Yet even here the fateful curse that hangs over the Rheingold and all who touch it—here, in the hour of joy and god-like splendour—there is a hint of the final overthrow of the Walhalla and the "Dusk of the Gods." It is to be seen in the crimson Niebelheim light upon the mighty ramparts and towers—a light that gives a sober tinge even to the rainbow—it is to be heard in the haunting cry of the Rhine daughters over their lost treasure, which makes even the happy gods pause on the threshold of Walhalla. It is felt in the mingled undertones of the orchestra, breaking forth at last into the strong closing bars of the *Rheingold*. A terrible firmness of purpose, beyond the control even of the gods themselves, is urging forward the course of all things in heaven and earth; none may go back, none may look behind. The old *Anangke* —or Necessity—of the Greeks is at the bottom of all, and seems to say alike to the Rhine daughters, the dwarfs, the giants, and the gods, "Go forward; the end must come; what will be, will be."

413. THE RAINBOW SCENE.

The *Rheingold* lasts for two hours and a half at a stretch, during which time there is no pause in the music, but there is also no sign of fatigue in the audience who sit in rapt attention to the close.

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II.—*Walküre.*

With the *Walküre,* or Warrior Daughters of God Wotan (Wodin), begin the famous three days to which the *Rhein-*

414. *gold,* described in my last, was the introduction.

ENTER THE KING AND WAGNER. The God Wotan in his earthly wanderings became the father by a mortal woman of Siegmund and Sieglinde. Upon the interest of one of the Walküre, Brünnhilde, in this couple, and her final sacrifice of Virgin deity in their cause, this next drama in three acts turns. Let us enter the theatre about five o'clock. A *fanfare* of trumpets outside gives the signal. The lights are lowered. In the twilight the whole assembly seems aware that WAGNER and the King are approaching. In the Royal box I see the two stand for a moment like dark shadows, the King bowing once to the people amid breathless silence, broken only by the woe-burdened chords and unquiet distant thunderings of the orchestra.

The curtain rises. A wild cabin, into which out of the storm enters Siegmund—throws himself, dead with fatigue,

415. before a rude fire, and sleeps. In steals Sieg-

SIEGMUND AND SIEGLINDE. linde, his sister, the forced wife of Hunding, a savage hunter. Thus brother and sister, separated from the cradle, meet unknown to each other. We are at once completely outside all conventional moralities—

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in an age and faerie sphere in which human passion has to be contemplated apart from all civilised conditions. We thus follow breathlessly, without shock, the inexorable development of the various phases of recognition, self-abandonment, confession, and ecstasy which follow. The wild music flowing to the wild life of the wandering Siegmund, as he pours it all out to his new friend and protectress, who revives him with a cooling draught, consoles him, and already claims him as her deliverer; the entrance of Hunding; the fight between him and Siegmund, which is to take place on the morrow; the sleeping potion administered to him by Sieglinde, and the long scene at night, where she steals out, all in white, to Siegmund—these are graphic and awe-inspiring situations; the moon spreads through the room, and the fire dies, and through the open door are seen the fair, moon-lit woods, and all is peace—this the reader must imagine for himself. Nothing more searching in delineation of passion was ever conceived than this scene between lovers about to risk all—with fate overhanging them, and hearts filled alternately with the pain of dread forebodings and an inextinguishable love.

As the last spark on the hearth dies, the music becomes flowing and deep, like a broadening river. A strange red light—the light of Wotan—falls on the giant oak-tree, showing the hilt of a sword plunged in there by a mysterious stranger. He who could draw it should alone

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free Sieglinde from her brutal husband. Siegmund rises and draws it, amidst a great burst of triumphant sound. This, on the morrow, should give him victory over the coarse Hunding, for the sword is Wotan's own, hidden there for his son Siegmund. The deep wealth of sound upon which the lovers are now buoyed up as they fall into each other's arms is like the mingling of oceans and rivers and clouds; and the strong, terrible chords, to which the curtain again falls, are as the might of resistless love, hurrying to its fateful close.

416. BRÜNNHILDE'S MISSION.

The second act reveals to us the wild Brünnhilde—War Walküre. With spear in hand she scales the rocks; the clouds are about her; she shouts to her companions, and her voice mingles with the winds. As she mounts each crag her notes rise higher and higher—a melody of bewitching, boisterous wildness. How Wotan bids the War Walküre defend his favourite Siegmund in the coming duel with Hunding; how Fricka, his jealous wife, burns for the death of Siegmund, the mortal bastard; how the god gives in weakly, and bids Brünnhilde destroy him; how Brünnhilde, a dear, good creature, protests, and goes at last to her mission, clad in mail and scarlet, with a heavy heart—must be told in few words. From this moment to the end of the act the excitement, without pause, goes on, changing in form, but ever increasing. Now the flying lovers rush on to the rocky stage; the sound of Hun-

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ding's horn, the cry of his dogs, is in their ears; then all is again ecstasy; until Sieglinde breaks out in a strange scene of passionate remorse at having been the wife of an unloved man. Her intense love for Siegmund makes her past life seem too vile. But hark!—and the sound of dogs and horns, the rushing of wind and crashing of branches, swells in the orchestra, and Sieglinde faints, and is laid resting on a rock. Then a passage of unspeakable solemnity occurs with the re-entrance of Brünnhilde. She stands before Siegmund —come on her fateful errand—and the music grows sweet and solemn, with the majestic Wotan "motif"; she tells the hero that whoever looks on her must shortly die; that she takes the warrior to Walhalla, but that he must fall in fight. Measured and slow as fate, yet strangely full of tenderness, is her terrible message. With knightly calm he listens, and at last, with a burst of love which shakes Brünnhilde's own heart, he declares that he will kill himself and his beloved, but they shall not be divided. The Walküre, at last overcome, and faithless to Wotan's command, promises protection.

But the orchestra resumes the stormy music; the battle hour approaches; clouds hurry restlessly through the sky;

417. THE FIGHT.

Hunding is close at hand amongst the high crags yonder. With a burning kiss the hero leaves Sieglinde, and hurries to meet the foe. She rises, all is wild, and the air grows stormy and dark around

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her; she calls Siegmund wildly, and rushes forward; but too late, she never sees him alive again. On the topmost rocks we hear, behind the clouds, the warriors shouting and the arms clashing. It is a fearful moment, and the orchestra is taxed to the uttermost. The clouds part for a moment only—the bright Brünnhilde is seen floating above her hero, clad in shining steel and crimson. In vain! Wotan himself appears, and shatters Siegmund's magic sword with his spear. The hero is slain. The clouds now roll aside; in terrible red smoke and blinding light, the angry god stands out. At a word Hunding, the coarse hunter, falls dead before him; but the god turns upon poor Brünnhilde, and, as the curtain falls, curses her for her disobedience.

The storm music and the thunder roll away; and, after a tension probably unexampled in dramatic art, we issue forth into the now cool and darkened air, eighteen hundred people disperse upon the hill and roadside, and discuss for an hour in the temporary *cafés* their experiences. Liszt I found with his daughter, Madame Wagner, and other ladies, chatting to a group. The prince and poet of the Romantic School has a long cigar in his mouth and a large bock of beer in his hand. People hurry up and are introduced at times—he receives all cordially with "Schön! Schön!" I remember that Wagner was loudly called for at the end of the second act, but did not appear. But, oddly enough, before the last

418. IN THE CAFÉ.

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act, when the theatre was half empty, he came on the stage and bowed, and was cheered wildly.

The last act opens with a scenic effect which it was anticipated would tax any theatre to render adequately. The chorus of the Walküre on the rocks, half hidden with clouds, as they wait for Brünnhilde, their Amazon sister, unconscious of her catastrophe, is quite unparalleled in its wild and spontaneous splendour. The cries and shouts are hurled from rock to rock with waving of arms and clashing of spears and shields. The troubled sky is in ceaseless motion, the air is filled with boisterous elemental mirth, and the bursting cries of unbridled animal spirits are, somehow, all woven into a kind of chorus, resting upon such an ocean of orchestral sound as has certainly never before been heard or conceived by mortals. Amid thunder and flashes Brünnhilde, dragging poor rescued Sieglinde, now suddenly appears on the stage, and what follows must be merely summarised. The despair of Sieglinde; the devotion of the tender, reckless Brünnhilde, inconceivably touching symbol of the devotion which good women are capable of for each other; the wild recrudescence of joy which seizes Sieglinde when Brünnhilde hands to her, with fervid song, the fragments of Siegmund's magic sword—all that is left of him now, yet enough for vengeance, enough to win the Rheingold from the Giant Fafner, enough for the hero Sieglinde is about to bear.

419. THE WALKÜRE CHORUS.

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She is then hurried away to safety, and, with the appropriate recurring strains in the orchestra, the God Wotan at last approaches.

The favourite Walküre, deprived of her arms, comes forth to learn the doom of her disobedience. Some divine necessity compels her banishment from Walhalla, and infinitely subtle and complex are the music and sentiment which follow. Brünnhilde has been drawn earthwards by human sympathy—she will become whole woman by-and-bye, who has thus stooped to human affection—but earthly love shall destroy her divinity; and, meanwhile, parted for ever from her sisters and her father, who still love her fondly, she shall sleep amid wild and lonely rocks encircled with fire, waiting for the lover who, dauntless, shall find her and wake her there, and make her his earthly bride.

420. THE SLEEP OF THE WALKÜRE.

The flight of the sister Walküre in the storm, with a wild chorus full of despairing screams, is followed by a protracted and inconceivably touching parting between the resigned Brünnhilde and the father, Wotan—whose anger has died away as the sunset sky has slowly faded into deeper and deeper grey. Then, to long drawn out and enchanting melody, Brünnhilde's head sinks on her father's breast, and his mind wanders back to the happy time when she, the War Maiden, his pride, brought new warriors, the boldest and best, to fill the Walhalla courts. The poor Walküre can but sob that

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she has loved her father Wotan and Walhalla, and implore him, if she is to become a mortal's bride, to surround her rock with fire, to bar her from all but the bravest. It is now almost dark; a faint red light lingers on the supple yet lordly form of Brünnhilde. A strange swoon seems to have already seized her; the god lays her gently prostrate on the rock, then waves her into her long sleep. Then, retiring suddenly to the back of the stage, he calls for the Fire God, Loge; a burst of fire breaks out and runs round the stage; in another moment the whole background is an immense wall of rose-coloured flame, which gradually creeps round the rock. To the most enchanting and dream-like music of silver bells, harps, and flutes, with an under-current of bass strings, the sleep of the Walküre begins; the god scales the rocks, stands for a moment in the midst of the fire, then passes through it out of sight, as the curtain falls to the silver, peaceful, unearthly cadences, repeated again and again, swelling and falling, and ceasing at last, leaving the heart, after so much fierce storm, at rest.

III.—*Siegfried.*

421. WAGNER'S RECITATIVE.

The grotesque music given to both Mime and Alberich, like so much of WAGNER'S misunderstood recitative, aims, no doubt, at following the inflections of the human voice as it is affected often by very commonplace moods, as well as by the meaner

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impulses of arrogance, vexation, anger, and spite. What we lose in musical charm we gain in a certain ingenious sense of reality. I think the power of WAGNER, the solidity of his work, largely turns upon this. He is never afraid of length, of silence, even of dulness, caused by protracted or delayed action. Like DE BALZAC, he knew well how to work up slowly and surely to a consummate effect, and his effect never hangs fire, nor is it ever liable to an anticlimax, that bane of second-rate artists.

422. MIME WORKS.

A cavern rocky—somewhere deep in a forest—lies before us; and Mime the misshapen thing—fit brother of Alberich, the lord of Niebelheim, or fog-land, works away at a forge to make a sword fit for—who? In he comes, the wild, robust child of the forest—reminding me of the first appearance of that other wild, robust creation Parsifal. In he comes, driving a fierce brown bear bridled in sport. Mime the dwarf shrinks back—Mime, who has been foster-father to this Siegfried, son of Sieglinde and Siegmund. He has brought him up in ignorance of his parentage, knowing well the dash of Deity in his blood, and knowing also that could the fragments of the magic sword, given up by Sieglinde as her most precious legacy, be somehow welded together again, Siegfried, her son, would be able to wield it with resistless might and slay the dragon Fafner who keeps the gold.

This accursed gold-heap—eternal symbol of ill-gotten

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wealth and the curse of it—forms the magic centre around which all the actors in this cycle of dramas consciously or unconsciously move.

423. MIME AND SIEGFRIED

The character-contrast between Mime the mean, double-dealing, cringing, cowardly creature who hopes to use the young hero for his purposes, and Siegfried the free, noble, daring youth, with a presentiment of great destinies before him, both are drawn in large outline. Great distinction of type, great simplicity of conception and straightforwardness of execution; the master is sure of his touches and lays them on with a free bold hand. Siegfried throughout revolts against Mime—yet Mime holds secrets which he burns to know. Who were his father and mother? What means his wild, secluded, lonely life? He cannot taste broth at Mime's hands without disgust, he cannot talk with him without quarrelling, he can hardly bear the sight of him, will not believe that Mime is his father at all; wants a sword that he cannot break; will have the fragments of the magic sword "Nothung" welded; shatters Mime's welding of them, proceeds to weld them himself.

424. THE WELDING OF THE SWORD.

The welding of Nothung, hammer on anvil in the gloomy cavern, with the regular puffing and blowing of the rude bellows—the protracted song—most tuneful, almost conventional in form—broken off and resumed, and itself, as it were, welded with

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every blow into the sword Nothung, produces a very singular and "seizing" effect. The actors appear to be entirely lost in their business—the audience have come upon a forge in a very rocky forest cave—difficult work is going on, to very long-winded accompaniment, full of varied realistic detail. If we want to see the work put through we must stop; if not, we may go. But the work cannot be hastened—the welding of that sword is the turning-point of the drama—the wielding of it secures the gold, the ring, and the helmet; and the spell of these secures Brünnhilde for Siegfried—the transfer of these treasures wrecks Brünnhilde and brings on the final catastrophe. The action is delayed, but the welding is thorough, and when with a mighty stroke the anvil is cloven in twain, we know that the young hero is at last fitted with an irresistible weapon, and that the drama has moved through one of its most critical and decisive stages.

425. THE DRAGON'S CAVE.

The Dragon's Cave—the summer woods—the coming together of the various people interested in the gold—these are the elements of the next act. There is the Wanderer, the god Wotan in disguise, who originally stole the gold from Alberich, who in his turn had filched it from the Rhine girls, and who now thinks he may get it back somehow from Fafner the giant. Fafner, in the form of a great dragon, lies on it day and night. There is Alberich, the first robber, hovering about

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the Neid-hole, or cavern, in the hope of getting back the treasure; there is Mime, who about this time makes sure of the prize in his own mind, as he fancies Siegfried is in his power, and proposes to employ him to kill Fafner. Then he will poison him with a draught, and clutch both magic sword and treasure.

All these old-world scamps meet and talk and eye each other, and plot and ask riddles and give hints. Siegfried, meanwhile, holds the key of the great enigma—

426. SIEGFRIED APART.

stands completely apart—alone in his strength, simplicity, and might, the holder and wielder of the sword Nothung—with deep scorn in his heart for the pitiful and mean schemers and quacks by whom he is surrounded, and with an innate perception, born of communing with nature, of the snares they are laying for him.

The grimness and hideousness of the cavern and the Worm-dragon seem to resume the spirit of all the unlovely wickedness and avarice of Siegfried's rivals. The

427. MISE-EN-SCÈNE.

glorious sunshine, the glowing foliage of the woodlands, the song of wild birds, symbolize the spirit whilst providing a *mise-en-scène* for the valour, the victory, and the love-musings of the young hero.

The Dragon is no doubt the weak point. I believe Mr.

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DANNREUTHER gave three hundred pounds for him in London, and brought him over with the utmost care. His tail, I am told, was worked by one man inside him, and his jaws by another; but somehow he could not be got to show fight at the right time. He was a poor beast; the steam came out of his mouth too late; his tail stuck half-way on the wag, and he had evidently some difficulty in opening his jaws. He was easily slain, and rolled over conveniently enough, leaving the treasure in the hands of Siegfried.

428. A SORRY DRAGON.

Otherwise the weirdness of the whole scene was indescribable. That enchanting summer land—that delicious burst of woodland melody—that strong contrast between the blazing sheen of emerald and amber-lighted trees and the gloomy cavern hard by—that sudden poetic, trance-like pause, full of wild birds and love dreams, just before the sharp attack on the Dragon, followed by the repulsive murder of Mime, and the resumption of the same bright love dream immediately afterwards: this can never fail to impress the dullest sensibility with its extreme beauty. VOGEL'S Siegfried, as an impersonation, was on a level with MATERNA'S Brünnhilde. The music to which the curtain falls on the second act, as Siegfried, wild with anticipation, follows the bird that flies before him singing, and showing him the way to Brünnhilde, who lies on her fire-girt rock waiting for him—that ocean of summer

429. BIRD MUSIC IN SUMMER LAND.

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woodland music upon which a hero's spirit passes into the consciousness of first love—is beyond these halting words.

The contrasts which follow are dramatically admirable. Old Wotan's gloomy conference with Erda, the mystic partner of his old-world love, in which he takes stock of the situation, views with mixed feelings the rise and progress of Siegfried, and with feelings still more mixed the decay of his own power and the approaching downfall of Walhalla; then his dubious colloquy with Siegfried, who suddenly confronts him on his way to the fire-girt rock; his mingled pride and dignity, together with his growing sense of being powerless to hinder the consummation of Brünnhilde's union with the upstart demi-semi-god;—follow scene after scene with cumulative effect. The striking episode in which Siegfried breaks the old god's spear, when it is thrust between him and the unknown object of his passion; and finally the terrific ocean of crimson flame through which the hero bursts fearlessly to the side of the sleeping Walküre—truly these be massive and monumental conceptions! Like great world-types they unroll themselves before us in so many magical scenes of unsurpassed, dramatic and daring grandeur.

430. CONTRASTS.

I suppose it will be generally allowed that WAGNER is the greatest master of love duets that ever wedded words to music. The absorbing picture of love and jealousy in

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Lohengrin, of pure and impure love subtly contrasted in *Tannhäuser* — passion of love and death in *Tristan and Isolde,* the unique passages between Parsifal and Kundry—passion essentially primeval touched with a certain divine intensity as is fit in demi-gods —like Siegfried and Brünnhilde—these are essential manifestations of dramatic force and profound intention, beside which even the love passages in GOUNOD'S *Faust and Marguerite* seem like mere child's play.

431. LOVE DUETS.

The moment has arrived. The majestic Brünnhilde wakes with all her divine war-maiden instincts still upon her; confronts the hero who is to win her, at first with terror; realises slowly, painfully, then irresistibly and ecstatically, the might of human passion, and surrenders the old heroism of a crumbling Walhalla, and the dreams of god-like power and independence, at the burning touch of human love. Better that touch of real life than all the flimsy visions of a decaying mythology—nobler the sincerity of human feeling, that seizes its object and concentrates its sympathies, than the vague, restless wanderings of old reprobates like Wotan, or the war-lust of fiery, death-hungry Walküre such as Brünnhilde was —such as the bride Walküre will never be again. Hear her.

432. THE SURRENDER.

"O Siegfried!
Lightener—world's delight—
Life on earth—
And laughing lord,
Leave, ah! leave me!"

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And Siegfried but replies:

"Awaken Brünnhilde!
Waken thou maid!
Live to me, laugh to me,
Sweetest delight:
Be mine! be mine!"

No translation seems to give an adequate vigour or do justice to the strength and passion of the dialogue, which ends in a long pæan of triumph as the curtain falls and Siegfried takes his prize.

Hail thou Sun
That shinest around me;
Hail thou morn
From out the dark;
Hail thou world
That wakes Brünnhilde.
She wakes! she lives!
She laugheth back
My splendid star,
My Brünnhilde's glow.
Mine ever mine,
All of her mine
And only mine,

(*Brünnhilde throws herself into Siegfried's arms.*)

Come, life of me!
Thou light of love!
Thou laughing Death!

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IV.—The Götterdämmerung.

The *Niebelung's Ring* closes with the "Dusk of the Gods." The truly prodigious way in which all the leading subjects are repeated, inverted and worked up in the music of this last colossal drama cannot be described. The Wotan Melody—perhaps the finest—blown on trumpets outside the theatre, rang out far over hill and dale, and floated like an ominous blast to the town below. At the familiar sound the people flock to their seats in the theatre. The first melodies of the *Rheingold* break from the orchestra, and the Norns or Fates are seen weaving the last of their ropes; they see as they weave the story of Siegfried and Brünnhilde—they see the gods growing old—they trace the history of Wotan's earth love—they start with horror as they at last see the flames rising in a vision round Walhalla. The rope breaks; the Norns vanish.

433. THE VISION OF THE NORNS.

The day dawns to a clear subject worked in skilful counterpoint, and the farewell scene between Brünnhilde and her new mate, Siegfried, as he parts from her to seek knightly adventures, now absorbs us. Her sorrow at parting is almost drowned by her feeling of pride in him and the thought of glorious war; and here the Walküre nature breaks out in her. She would fain follow him, but this may not be; and as she is

434. SIEGFRIED LEAVES BRÜNNHILDE.

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about to be left again on her fire-girt rock, she scales one height after another, shouting a wild and ecstatic adieu to the hero, who is heard galloping away to a strange mixture of Rhine music and a peculiar, joyous, scampering subject, which, together with his horn-blast, always heralds his coming and going.

435. THE HOUSE OF HAGEN.

But the curse of the Gold is upon him, and death, and worse than death, is brewing for him in the house of Hagen, hateful bastard son of Dwarf Alberich, by a mortal woman. Hagen lives with his brother on Rhine-banks, when Siegfried, as a wandering knight, appears at his halls. Hagen, Ghunter, the brother, and the fair sister, Gutrune, are sitting together. Hagen, the instrument of Alberich, is wholly bent on getting back the Rheingold. He tells Ghunter of the sleeping Brünnhilde, who can alone be approached by Siegfried, and inflames his desire to seize her. At this moment Siegfried's horn is heard; he enters, and the plot thickens. He is soon given a drink which makes him forget every woman he has known before, even poor Brünnhilde. Siegfried, thus bewitched, then proceeds to fall in love with Gutrune, and listens to the tale of Brünnhilde on the flame-girt rock with astonishment, swears friendship to Ghunter, and undertakes to assume his friend's shape by magic, cross the flames, seize his own Brünnhilde, and hand her over to Ghunter.

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From this moment the horrible plot is harrowing in the extreme. No art, no music, no magic can reconcile us to what follows; the horror is piled up. The scene changes. Brünnhilde waits on her rock; hears a horse and Siegfried's horn, but with something jarring and false about it; but she heeds not that, he returns! The fire is crossed, a warrior appears on the height. She flies to throw herself into his arms—the form of Ghunter is before her! How he coolly hands her over to the real Ghunter, who is waiting; her horror and bewildering despair; his callous indifference and complete absence of all memory of her, which she cannot revive in him; the meeting of the two couples, Brünnhilde and Ghunter with Siegfried and his new bride, Gutrune; the terrible scene between Brünnhilde and Siegfried before the household and retainers of Hagen, in which she declares Gutrune's husband to be hers; the jealous frenzy of Ghunter and the death of Siegfried, which is now plotted and presently carried out by stabbing in the back—all this it is impossible here to do more than summarise.

436. CAPTURE OF BRÜNNHILDE.

A brief and exquisite episode between the Rhine-daughters and Siegfried, chiefly a treble trio by the floating nymphs of sustained and enchanting beauty, relieves the pressure of horror we have just been going through from the despair and fury of Brünnhilde, whose wild cries and heart-rending gestures can never be forgotten.

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Then comes, at last, the beginning of the end. Siegfried, seated with Hagen, Ghunter, and warriors, drinks of a cup which restores his memory, and begins to relate his past life; as he advances in his narrative, full of wondrous declamation and music, he at length nears the Brünnhilde episode; snatches of the Walküre and the fire-sleep music break out; a strange fervour seizes him; he tells of the embrace on the rock, and his mind begins to reel with sudden perplexity. But it is enough! At this point Hagen stabs him in the back. As he dies his thoughts grow clear. Brünnhilde's love returns—he sees but her, dreams of her in his dying swoon; although she is not present—she, his first, last love, fills his latest consciousness.

437. THE MURDER.

The struggle for the Ring which follows, the suicide of Ghunter, the sudden apparition of Brünnhilde, introduce the last episode of striking beauty. The scenery from this point becomes indescribable. The moon is full upon the ruffled Rhine-waters; the tall funeral tapers flash on the steel helms of the retainers; the body of Siegfried, clad in mail, lies in the middle of the stage; and the stately form of the Walküre is isolated by his side, as the crowd falls to right and left.

438. THE END.

Whilst an immense funeral pyre is being built up in the background beside the Rhine-waters, Brünnhilde makes her last reconciliation with Siegfried. As she gazes on his pallid face she reads that dying recognition. She under-

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stands, at last, the magic spell that was on him. Her love towers above everything else—she stands there the embodiment of the sublime trust in love beyond sight, that believes and lasts out against all adverse shocks, and is faithful even unto death. She has known divine might in the halls of Walhalla, she has had the power of the Ring and the power of Gold, and enjoyed all fame of war and victory, and now, with her latest breath, comes solemnly forth what is the conclusion of the whole drama, "Blessedness, through joy and sorrow, comes to us from Love unquenchable alone!"

With this she moves in the moonlight towards the Rhine. She draws the Ring of the Rheingold—the cause of such grief and manifold pain—from the hero's finger, and flings it back into the Rhine, from whence at the commencement it was snatched by Alberich.

The Walküre's black war-horse has been brought to her; she waves high a flaming torch, and hurls it upon the bier; the fire rises in lurid columns. She mounts her steed and leaps into the flames.

At that moment, in the awful glow of the flaming pyre, the waters, still flashing with moonlight in the background, begin to swell and advance, and the Rhine-daughters, singing the wildest Rhine music, are seen floating to and fro. Beyond a ruddier light broadens, until the distant sky discloses the courts of the Walhalla in flames. With a crash in the foreground the house of Hagen falls; and whilst the mighty conflagration flares up in the distance,

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the Rhine-waters, to rushing music, advance and submerge the whole of the stage.

439. A SPEECH BY WAGNER.

Thus, with a scene of unequalled dramatic splendour, ends the fourth and last immense drama of the *Niebelung's Ring*. This is not the place for fuller criticism of such a work. At the close of it the pent-up enthusiasm of the public rose to a pitch of frenzy. They stood up, and, turning to the Royal box, which WAGNER had left, shouted to the King, who remained seated and bowed graciously. The plaudits continuing, His Majesty motioned to the stage. The people turned, and in a moment WAGNER, dressed in plain black, with his hat in one hand, stepped out from the middle of the curtain, and stood motionless with his grey head uncovered until repeated cries of "Sit down!" "Sit down!" and "Hush!" had calmed the assembly. WAGNER then spoke very quietly, and I regret that not hearing him quite distinctly at moments I am unable to render *verbatim* a speech which has doubtless been elsewhere recorded. I understood him to say he had taken many years in preparing this work; that he had presented a Saga of the Niebelung in the belief that it dealt with subjects peculiarly congenial to the Germanic races; that a new and national development of the drama was now within their reach; he believed that they had been satisfied with what they had listened to, so that it had been to the many assembled there a real

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Festspiel. He then thanked the King for his support and encouragement; and, the curtain being suddenly lifted, all the crowd of musicians and actors who had taken part in the Festival stood ranged, and WAGNER, turning round, thanked them in the warmest terms for their devotion and assistance.

So ended the first great Wagner Festival, held at Bayreuth in 1876.

. . . . .

As some people seem to have considerable difficulty in mastering the plot of the *Nibelung's Ring*, I venture to offer a rough skeleton account of it, which may profitably be studied before or after witnessing the four dramas.

I.

RHEINGOLD.

SCENE I.—The sun irradiating the depths of the river, becomes in the myth—*mythos*, I ought to say—a concrete treasure—Rhinegold. It has marvellous properties, and if stolen and forged into a ring, guides its owner to all the hidden gold-mines of the earth. But he who owns the gold must renounce love. Three Rhine girls guard the gold. Alberich, King of the Undergrounds, a hideous dwarf, makes lôve to the Under-water girls of the Rhine, is rejected, renounces love, but clutches the gold, and makes off with it to Nibelheim—fog-land—his underground caves.

SCENE II. Wotan, King of Gods, tired of love, has employed giants to build him a majestic palace, and offered them Freia, Goddess of Love, as payment. The other gods refuse to part with Freia when the palace is done, and Wotan has nothing left which the giants will take instead. The clever fire-god Loge hears of the Rhine gold, now in Alberich's possession. Offers it to the giants. Offer accepted, and Loge and Wotan go off to steal it.

SCENE III.—Loge and Wotan enter Nibelheim. Alberich displays the

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gold; also a cap, which enables the wearer to assume any form. At Loge's suggestion, he becomes a toad, just for fun, is captured, and the ring and all his wealth passes over to Wotan, but not before the ring is cursed by Alberich, and destined henceforth to bring misery and disaster to its owner.

SCENE IV.—The gold and fatal ring are got rid of to the giants, who take the whole in payment; Freia, who gives youth and joy to the gods, is released, and the gods walk processionally into their new palace, over a beautiful rainbow bridge. Curtain falls.

II.

WALKÜRE.

SCENE I.—Opens as Siegmund, a son of earth-woman by god Wotan, staggers into a log hut, breathless, and falls prostrate with fatigue. Flying from his enemies, he has found shelter—but where? In Hunding's hut. Enter Sieglinde, daughter of earth-woman by god Wotan; brother and sister, unknown to each other, converse. Hunding enters, and all three converse The situation dawns on them, and Hunding, respecting his guest, recognises his foe, and summons him to mortal combat on the morrow. That night, in a stolen interview, Sieglinde and Siegmund arrange matters; a magic sword left sticking in a big tree by Wotan, is claimed by Siegmund and drawn forth, that being the only provision made by the god for his gallant offspring. The lovers escape together.

SCENE II.—Father Wotan parleys with the war maidens anent the coming duel of Siegmund with Hunding. Father Wotan parleys with his wife Fricka on the same subject. Fricka is mad for the death of the irregular son Siegmund. Wotan, with bleeding heart, at last yields, and Walküre Brünnhilde has commission to get him well slain in the fight. Warlike, but tender, Brünnhilde appears to Siegmund, and tells him of his fate, but is melted at the spectacle of the despairing lovers, and goes over in disobedience to their cause, protects the hero in the duel, but is foiled by Wotan, who comes in as a most detestable *deus ex machinâ*, and gets his own son killed after all. Brünnhilde takes care of poor Sieglinde about to become the mother of Siegfried, and gives her the fragments of the magic sword, only shattered by the might of Wotan. Brünnhilde, for her disobedience, loses her divinity, and is laid to sleep on a fire-encompassed rock. Having stooped to love, she is now handed over to the love of a mortal, only the lover must be brave, and will have to get through the fire and claim her, which brings us to the threshold of the third drama *Siegfried*.

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III.

SIEGFRIED.

SCENE I.—Sieglinde has died giving birth to Siegfried. Mime (Alberich's deformed brother), who lives in a wood, has sheltered her, and, knowing of the secret of the hero she has given birth to, his demi-godhood, and the invincible sword he is to wield, the fragments of which are in Mime's possession, the shrewd dwarf brings him up with care, and intends to make him by-and-by slay Fafner, the giant, who, in the disguise of a dragon, keeps the gold stolen for the giants by the gods from Alberich. The first scene concludes with the successful mending of the broken sword by the combined efforts of Siegfried, now grown to manhood, and his foster-father, Mime.

SCENE II.—All parties interested are now found lurking about the hole where Fafner watches the gold. The old scapegrace of a god Wotan comes prowling about, partly curious to see his grandson, Siegfried, who is to wield the magic sword—partly with his eye on the gold. Alberich turns up at the hole watching the main chance, and ready to clutch at his lost treasure. Mime makes sure of it when Siegfried has killed the dragon. He means to bring him a sleep-drink, slay him, and get the gold. Presently the dragon is slain. Mime offers the drink; Siegfried sees through him, and slays him too. Having by chance put his finger, stained with dragon's blood, to his lips, he suddenly understands the cry of the birds in the branches. One bird sings out loud and clear, and tells of the maid who lies, fire-surrounded, on a rock. Siegfried follows the magic bird, who is to lead him to Brünnhilde.

SCENE III.—On his way he meets Wotan, who opposes his spear, to test his descendant's prowess and power. Siegfried breaks it with his magic sword, and with it scatters the might of Walhalla. He reaches the fire-rock bursts through the flames, and claims Brünnhilde as his bride.

IV.

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG.

Siegfried having left Brünnhilde in search of knightly adventure, comes to the Rhine castle of Hagen. There he is drugged with a magic potion by Hagen's daughter, Gutrune, who wants to marry him. Said potion causes him to forget his love for Brünnhilde and fall in love with Gutrune. He

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now promises to go with her brother, Gunther, and capture Brünnhilde on her fire-surrounded rock and hand her over to Gunther. Arrives with him, seizes Brünnhilde, and hands her over. The frightful situation is then worked out in Hagen's castle by the Rhine. Siegfried appears as Gutrune's lover, Gunther as Brünnhilde's; they all four meet. Brünnhilde is puzzled, and falls into despair at not being recognised by Siegfried, who is under a spell. In his life-time the harrowing mystery is never solved, but before his assassination by Hagen he partially recovers his memory. Whilst reciting the story of his life he is suddenly stabbed. Brünnhilde then comes on the scene to find him dead; but the truth that he has been bewitched dawns upon her. She proclaims him tender and true in death. They heap up logs; he is hoisted on to the pile, but not before Brünnhilde has taken the fatal ring from the hero's finger, and cast it back into the Rhine. The Rhine girls appear on the surface singing. The air darkens, the flames rise. Brünnhilde's war horse is led out for the last time; horse and Walküre leap into the flames. The Rhine swells up to the foot-lights, washing over everything, and extinguishing the funeral pile; and the house of Hagen—pillars, doors, and lintel—falls into ruin.

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VII.

INTERLUDE

ON TANNHÄUSSER AND LOHENGRIN.

THE overture to *Tannhäuser* and the prelude to *Lohengrin* were the first fragments of WAGNER which arrested seriously the attention of people in England about 1860, and led some of us to think that perhaps he might have a future before him. The French had already made up their minds that he had none, and M. FÉTIS, in his great *Dictionnaire des Musiciens*, had boldly written as late as 1866: "To-day the transient curiosity about WAGNER is satisfied; indifference has come, and the so-called music of the future is already a thing of the past."

440. WAGNER'S MUSIC, 1860.

It is quite surprising how little even good musicians, who studied WAGNER'S scores and tried over the arrangements

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à quatre mains suspected the real character of a great deal of his music. I distinctly recollect one of the best musicians in England declaring, about 1859, that although the beginning and end of the *Tannhäuser* overture were admirable, there seemed to him a good deal of chaos about the middle; and chaos it undoubtedly sounded as it used in those days to be played in England. The secret of subduing the strings and playing the high notes in tune *pp*, thus striking the elastic balance of the whole work, allowing no part to drop, but realising the grand unity and true subordination of each part to the whole—these things were but slowly learned. In WAGNER'S music it is not sufficient to play the notes, or even attend to the *p*'s and *f*'s; each musician must understand the mind of the composer—feel his intention, and discover the secret of the special part which he has to play in the whole. The Wagnerian orchestra is not a machine; it is a living organism.

441. THE DRAMAS PLACED.

The *Tannhäuser* and the *Lohengrin* are the two first of the legendary dramas which serve to illustrate the Christian chivalry and religious aspirations of the Middle Ages, in conflict on the one side with the narrow ideals of Catholicism, and on the other with the free instincts of human nature. *Parsifal* forms with them a great Trilogy of Christian legends, as the *Ring of the Niebelungen* forms a Tetralogy of Pagan Rhine and Norse legends. Both series of sacred and profane myths in the

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hands of WAGNER, whilst striking the great key-notes of Paganism and Catholicism, become the fitting and appropriate vehicles for the display of the ever-recurrent struggles of the human heart—now in the grip of inexorable fate—now passion-tossed, at war with itself and with time—soothed with spaces of calm—flattered with the dream of ineffable joys—filled with sublime hopes; and content at last with far-off glimpses of God.

442. IDEAL TYPES.

But in these dramas all is vast and elemental. The feelings are mightier and more intense than anything on earth; the mould of the characters is colossal. All that is transitory, personal, accidental in love, joy, revenge, despair, seems to have dropped away as we gaze at the rapture of Elsa or the despair of Tannhäuser. We are face to face with the unalterable types of human Tragedy; each phase as it passes resumes the whole of what is true and always true—essentially the same in the inmost fibre of every soul, amidst every local change of time and circumstance.

This representative character lifts Wagnerian drama—in conception, at least—to a level with that of SHAKSPERE'S highest flight. I do not compare the two as writers. SHAKSPERE had only the stage to think of, WAGNER wrote with reference to music, and, although sublime in parts, his literary work is very uneven, but, couched in the language of myth and metaphor, it is intensely real, and has that

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one quality of all great work, it appeals to what does not change in the heart of man as the ages roll on—"it speaks to time and to Eternity."

VIII.

"TANNHÄUSER" AND "LOHENGRIN."

443. USE OF MYTH.

THE drama of *Tannhäuser* may be said to have burst upon WAGNER with the force of an imperious inspiration. He had been laying siege to the oracle in the *Flying Dutchman* and *Rienzi*, but the answer was uncertain and confused. Essentially a man of his age, filled with a passionate sympathy with its desires and the prophetic instinct of its unreconciled needs, WAGNER had been restlessly seeking in the complex histories and clear myths of the Past for some adequate arena for the interpretation of the Present. He had long felt that the life problem of the nineteenth century was the reconciliation of the Old and New World Spirits, the harmony of the Secular and Religious life. The problem has apparently been given up as hopeless by the new ideal school of ROSSETTI, MORRIS, and BURNE JONES, who avowedly are dead to the present, and live a dream-life, meditating the eternal Realities of Legend, in an unreal garden of the Palingenesis.

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But with them the Art of the Present is used to glorify the Myth of the Past; with WAGNER the Myth of the Past is used to illustrate and enhance the Life of the Present.

The nearest approach to WAGNER's use of the myth is to be found in TENNYSON's *Idylls of the King* where the simple lines of the old narrative are used to illustrate a wide range of modern thought and feeling; but no oppression of heart is lifted, no problem is even stated, much less solved. In *Tannhäuser* WAGNER has at least seized with unexampled force those two leading thoughts with which our age is struggling: First, *the tremendous empire of the senses;* second, *the immense supremacy of the soul.* And his typical knight, in whom both these fierce currents meet and mingle, illustrates the conspicuous failure of the Roman Christianity to unite both streams into one river of life.

444. TENNYSON AND WAGNER.

Protestantism, though doubtless more true, with its married clergy and its liberal fees to the secular life, is only more successful because less logical than Romanism. Its profession and practice hardly cohere. The language of the Prayer-book contains still the anathema on the senses—the baptismal service is still the white-washing of appetites not conceived of as natural and right, but as carnal and evil—the Communion Service is still in the spirit and mostly in the very letter of the

445. DEFECTS OF PROTESTANTISM.

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Mass. No; our popular or unpopular religion in theory, whatever it may be in practice, can grapple with the Senses alone, but it is by crushing them, and that is the ascetic Romanism. It can grapple with the Soul alone, but it is by isolating it, and that is the mystic Romanism. But how to blend the two without defrauding either, *that* the Church does not teach; it has no theory on the subject, it addresses itself to each side of life separately, it is just where St. Simeon Stylites or St. Benedict left it ages ago. The Romanist or Ritualist is quite right when he says we must go back to those times; with our present theories we must either go backwards or forwards, we cannot stand still.

This is what people really mean when they say so often that we are in a Transition Age. What does the Church do? In theory she is simply ascetic and monastic. She prays for the extinction of the senses on her spiritual column, and for the interior development of the spirit in the silence of her cloister, and her activities are confined to works of necessity, charity, and disciplinary sacrifice. This may seem an unfair account of Protestant teaching at least; and so it is, for happily both Protestant and Catholic preachers are more human than their own theories, but their theories remain, and their real antagonism to the *whole* truth of life remains, and it is reflected in the sermons that are commonly heard

446. OUR CHURCH AND HER SERMONS.

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and which consist mainly of the STYLITES or the BENEDICT theology.

This is, in a word, the Counsel of Perfection, what Sunday by Sunday we have mainly to listen to in the pulpit:

1. Shun the natural desires.

2. Work out your salvation in meditation and prayer.

3. Labour for the necessaries of life and for the poor and sick.

All good and excellent; but such platitudes shrivel like flies in an oven when confronted with the two burning questions of the day:

1. The Tremendous Empire of the Senses.

2. The Immense Supremacy of the Soul; and how to reconcile them.

WAGNER, I need hardly say, has not answered the question in *Tannhäuser*, but he has placed it before us with admirable force and clearness, and shown us once for all how helpless and incapable the logical, if not infallible, Roman Church is to deal with it.

. . . . .

The overture to *Tannhäuser* will hold its own by the side of *Fidelio*, *Der Freyschutz*, or the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Larger in mould than the exquisite prelude to *Lohengrin*, it resumes the general atmospheres of the drama with equal breadth and clearness. The whole race of the Ghibellines is summed

447. THE OVERTURE TO TANNHÄUSER.

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up in Tannhäuser, indomitable knight—at once the enemy and the spiritual slave of Rome—Pagan, with an inexhaustible passion for the world and all that is in the world, an insatiable thirst for conquest, an ambition put to sleep by the senses for awhile only to break out into wilder life at the magic call of free poetic minstrelsy—Catholic and devotee, by a reaction as tremendous as the storm of human passion which sent him astray—strong, reckless, thorough, and sublime in his despair to the last, when pitying heaven touches into blossom the inexorable staff, and the soul of Tannhäuser finds in heaven with his beloved the peace and mercy denied him by the Vicar of God upon earth. Such is the spirit and such are the atmospheres that seem to roll and unroll before us like clouds of black and purple crimson and opaline fires as we listen to the massive, simple, yet richly-clothed subjects of this dramatic overture.

First leading idea of the overture—the quiet impassioned chant of the Pilgrims steals out of the distance; that chant so subtly woven into the changing fabric of the drama, running through it like a scarlet thread, now associated with the stupid mechanical patter of dull monks, flouting the merry sunshine with their sleepy dirge; now giving expression to Tannhäuser's hungry repentance, like the severe yet pardoning voice of a recording angel; now in the deepening twilight touched with the sad hues of sunset, and lifted away from the unhappy knight like the music of

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heaven heard without by one who must not enter; now goading him to the madness of despair with its insulting hope of salvation not for him; and lastly thundered as from heaven's open portals like a great judgment on the Papal blasphemy for cursing what God has not cursed—a shout and clarion of joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. Such is the significance of this incomparable motive of the Pilgrims' chant.

448. THE VENUS-BERG.

The procession draws near, the theme develops and swells, and the procession passes and the chant dies away to give sudden place to the second idea; for now the unhallowed spells of the Venus-berg are upon us, the vapours rise and twist, the sprites and forms of women mingling in wild dances and vanishing amidst the hissing of waterfalls and jets of rose and purple flame, and vistas of green sward between rocks of crystal, and far within, for a moment unveiled and shameless, the fatally fair old-world enchantress, Venus, Satanic rival of Holy Mary. It is but a glimpse; the second subject has been clearly affirmed, and gives place to the third, which is the free element in Tannhäuser's spirit: that immense independence which at one time asserts his will to break through the barrier of the Church and enjoy all earthly pleasures, and at another refuses to be held by the bonds of sense and will back to heaven and grace. Never

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a slave—that is the key-note of Tannhäuser's song—the same which he flings at Venus in the first act, and at the assembled knights and ladies in the second. Reckless, defiant even in his despair, bursting alike the bonds of sacerdotalism and sensuality, until he hails his last judgment and spiritual emancipation in death.

449. CLOSE.

The gentle love of Elizabeth, the faithful friendship of Wolfran, are alone absent from the overture; but the one is really as much drowned in religion as the other is absorbed by the complete uselessness of Wolfran's fidelity and the ultimate triumph of Tannhäuser. The overture ends with a sustained effort which, before the true rendering of the work was understood in England, subjected the audience to an almost intolerable strain. The pilgrims' chant is at last thrown out of semibreves and crotchets, into prolonged breves and semibreves, with a continuous *forte* and an incessant shrill violin accompaniment of wearing yet tireless activity and intensity. This is the divine judgment emphasis —this is the reversal of the Papal decree—this is the redemption of human nature struggling with its opposite and indomitable tendencies, the victory that has overcome the world, the earthly and heavenly passion, seen for the first time in the hour of death, in supreme harmony as one and indivisible.

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Act I.

After this immense introduction, which at once satisfies all our keenly aroused sensibilities, we find ourselves in that quiet region of contemplation, "above all pain, yet pitying all distress," whence we can witness undisturbed the pageantry of pleasure, remorse, love, sacrifice, and victory, which is about to pass before us.

450. VENUS.

In the glamour of roseate hues, smitten with the green glow as of prismatic light seen through ice, with vapours perfumed and aromatic rising in white clouds and dissolving in thin fleecy tints like sea-foam, the grotto of the Venus of the Venus-berg bursts upon us. The revelry seems at its wildest. We see the whirling of Bacchantes, but all is somewhat dim as in a dream or a dissolving view. The noisy music gives place to an exquisite siren-strain—a chorus of twenty bars only—it is the unearthly echo of magic voices calling the votaries of pleasure to the unhallowed delights of Holda, the dethroned Venus, once queen of heaven, now banished in disgrace to the bowels of the earth in the depths of the Venus-berg. Trenchant sarcasm on the helplessness of ascetic theology to mould the "great glad aboriginal instincts" into its system! Strange Nemesis of the religion of humanity, that the love of the sexes, made beautiful at least, if not holy, at Athens, should be relegated by Christian Rome to the infernal regions, that subterranean heaven of the Venus-berg, where

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love might lose its purity without losing its power and become bitter!

A fatigue and stillness fall, we scarce know how, over the scene, the music droops, a white cloud rolls across and veils the groups as they sink on the mossy banks or disappear into the rose and emerald caverns. A last faint strain reaches our ears and dies away, we are alone with the sleeping Tannhäuser and his enchantress Holda.

Tannhäuser awakes. He has been dreaming, but not of Holda's love, not of the grotto; its delights are worn out for him, he is inwardly sated, the chain begins to gall him. Bells are ringing in his ears, happy bells that tinkle in mountain glens, reminding him of the happy earth, its flowers—not these suffocating exotics—not these intense and slumbrous perfumes—but fresh woodlands, the horn of the hunter, the notes of wild birds. He longs once more for the nightingale, and the morning sunlight that never reaches him here. And then comes one of those delicate perceptions into the deeps of human nature as the knight explains to the chiding goddess that a mortal cannot always enjoy thus; *that* belongs to the eternally young and vigorous gods. His own nature of earth is ill matched with pleasure alone; it clogs, it pains him; he pines for earth with all its sorrows, he aspires from the heart of pleasure, from the paradise of the senses, to the life of action and sacrifice, to the heaven

451. TANNHÄUSER AND VENUS.

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of the soul. The dormant energies of the true knight awaken and he must away. The famous song which forms the second feature in the overture now breaks from him as harp in hand he confronts the angry goddess, and, whilst singing her praises, declares that he will go. Again a subtle touch,—the genuine tribute to the worth of Venus *as far as she goes*; but the free assertion that, isolated alike from the activities and disciplinary sorrows of earth, she fills but a part of life. The soul reaches out from the garden of the senses to a wider world, it is oppressed by the o'erarching roof of the Venus-berg however crystalline and rosy, it sighs for the blue dome of the illimitable sky.

All this is unintelligible to Holda, the impersonation of the senses, and, like many an angry woman, she alternately chides and coaxes and storms, not perceiving that her power is gone and that her late slave, however respectful, is free, and determined to remain so. The allegory of life is now closely clung to in the skilful dialogue. Having stormed in vain, the forsaken charmer cries bitterly, "Come back, come back! try and believe what I can be to you again."

452. THE PARTING.

"I wish no longer for your gifts."

"Oh, if you should long again, do not let your pride keep you from my arms!"

Then summing up the extreme statement of the revulsion of feeling which inspires him, "My longings are not for

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your pleasures but for battle. Listen, and know once for all, goddess, that I seek the Grave and I aspire to Death!"

"And if Death and the Grave reject you?"

"Death and the Grave are in my heart, and Repentance is my Peace!"

"There is no Rest or Salvation for you. I alone can give you Peace and Heaven."

Then, in a climax, the final note of the situation, nay, the key-note of the whole drama, is struck.

"Goddess of the Senses, in thee is not my Rest, but in Mary!" At the name of the most blessed Virgin, her successful rival, a loud clap of thunder shakes the grotto, and a dense cloud rolls over the stage, and Tannhäuser finds himself alone, but, as the thick white vapours part, the whole scene has shifted.

453. CHANGE TO THE UPPER EARTH.

One of those sudden atmospheric changes in which WAGNER revels now takes place, reminding us of the change from the lurid fire-scene on the Walküre's rock to the midsummer sleep of the Walküre maiden when Siegfried finds her there.

The grotto of the Venus-berg has vanished, with its purple shadows and rainbow lights, and dim recesses of mystery and underground magic—the free summer woods in the glory of May sunshine are before us, an old baronial castle crowns one of the near declivities. Tannhäuser finds himself not far from a wayside shrine and crucifix, on a wood-

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land slope reclines a young shepherd, the tinkle of sheep-bells mingles with the artless notes of the rustic pipe. He is skilfully woven into the drama with his new life of the spring and innocence and free sweet nature, and forms a subtle link between the artificially-lighted midnight of the Venus-berg and the bright woods and mountains of a smiling earth. The shepherd sings in his quaint melody of his dream he has had of a longing to follow Dame Holda into the Venus-berg—symbol of an universal experience, it is the rustic's vague idea of the artificial luxury and dissipation of great cities. He awakes (happily for him) to the sweet routine of the summer pastures, the woodland notes, the rustic flute.

Play on, thou simple boy; the two worlds that meet in yonder knightly soul are not for thee; thou wilt never know the depth either of his agony or his joy—it is not given to everyone to explore the magic haunt of the Venus-berg, and then surrender at discretion to Holy Mary!

The chorus of the pilgrims taking up the first subject now approaches. Solemnly the cowled monks pass in front of the shrine, uttering a prayer to the crucified One, and a greeting to the Virgin mother. To Rome they are bound, to seek free grace and rest in absolution from sin at the hands of Holy Church. The chant is the very embodiment of Tannhäuser's own aspirations, and as the pilgrims disappear,

454. PILGRIMS PASS.

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he falls at the foot of the crucifix and takes up the burden of the melodious prayer. Faint strains from the distant pilgrims come wafted on the air, a sound of holy bells is in his ears, his soul is bathed for the first time, after how many years! in the sweet and recreating emotion of penitence which seems to restore him to himself, and he vows never to rest till he too has found in a pilgrimage to Rome that pardon and peace which Rome alone can give.

455. HUNTERS PASS.

Suddenly hunting-horns break up his meditations, and a gay troop headed by the Landgrave and his knights come thronging down the mountain slope, and find the pilgrim Tannhäuser absorbed in prayer. The influence which others have upon a man's thoughts about himself is now happily illustrated. Tannhäuser, now recognised as the famous minstrel knight by the Landgrave and his friend Wolfran, at first will not hear of joining them. He is absorbed in his own thoughts of repentance; he is lost for ever to the world. Gradually the joyous greetings assure him that his old companions know nothing of his sin, his sorrow, or their causes—he is sympathetically won, his sensitive heart catches the light and fire of their good-fellowship. Some of us may remember those masterly moments in Mr. IRVING'S acting, when, as Eugene Aram or the hero of the *Bells*, he has managed at moments to forget his own crime and feel almost innocent and upright in the reflected sympathy and ignorance of

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those who believed him so; and is this not true to life? Does not a man feel twice guilty when found out? Is he not often redeemable *before* the brand has been put upon him, but not *afterwards*? To be accepted as innocent is sometimes almost as soothing to a broken spirit and a contrite heart as confession and absolution; and do we not all exercise a sort of absolution, binding and loosing from sin? The Landgrave and the merry hunters seem to toss the life and doings in Venus-berg away from Tannhäuser; they know nothing of them. For a moment, as he listens to their free joyous talk, the past seems wiped out. They remind him of his brilliant victory in song before he disappeared from among them—of Princess Elizabeth, who had acknowledged herself won by his knightly qualities, and who is ready to welcome him back. At the sound of her name his whole soul bounds, Venus is effaced, Holy Mary vanishes, Elizabeth seems now the idol ready to absorb and satisfy those senses profaned in the Venus-berg, and that soul so lately given in ascetic fervour to the Invisible and the Divine.

Act II.

456. ELIZABETH.

The joyous prelude to the second act contains, at the eleventh and following bars, one of those magic passages which Wagner seems able to throw in at will. It is the essence of a heart bounding with joy, and is worked into the accompaniment where

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Elizabeth greets the minstrel hall, so full to her of joy, and the memories of Tannhäuser's triumph in song.

The great hall of the minstrels in the Wartburg is before us: a wide prospect of wild woodland and hill is seen from the spacious open verandah, and the fair Elizabeth enters, attired in flowing white, her countenance radiant with joy. In one of those broad and free melodic recitatives so suitable to that vast amount of thinking aloud which fills WAGNER'S operas, Elizabeth describes how her heart was won by the strains of the minstrel knight Tannhäuser. To her presently enter Wolfran and Tannhäuser. The shock is almost too sudden for the maiden Princess, as Tannhäuser throws himself at her feet; she implores him to leave her, but in another moment her scruples are overcome by his passionate entreaties. He seems to yield himself entirely to this new situation, nor is the spell broken when Elizabeth asks where he has been and what he has been doing.

"Far away," he answers, "in a distant land. The veil of oblivion has forever fallen between yesterday and to-day—everything in the past has vanished; only one thing remains painted upon the darkness—the glory of your perfection that I now salute, yet never thought to see again." Elizabeth still, with a touch of maidenly reserve, tries in vain to check her own raptures at his return, but ends in that full expansive utterance—that majestic strain so nobly intense and pure (such a contrast to the feverish sensuality of the

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Venus-berg music), in which her noble love finds at once its expression and solace. Her reticence gives way. She is not afraid to tell him now all the strange growth of new feelings, vague longings, her sadness at his absence, her want of interest in all but him, her broken slumber, her waking tears, her maddening memories; and yet throughout she remains so simple, so pure, so guileless, that Tannhäuser feels, for the first time, what the true love of the pure woman might be to a man. Satisfying all, yet lifting all into a region of harmony and delight—not enervating but renewing and ennobling all things, and forming, indeed, the soul's missing link between earth and heaven! What wonder if in that moment the magic Venus and the mystic Mary are alike forgotten. The love duet rolls on impassioned, and yet strongly cast in an almost Mozartian mould of regularity, in which strophe and antistrophe are taken up alternately by the lovers, and whole phrases occur, ending with the perfect cadence, and repeated without variation as in the most orthodox Italian *scena*. We must recollect that *Tannhäuser* is not *Lohengrin*, and still leans more to the recognised form than any of WAGNER'S later operas. But here I cannot think that the regularity of form is in the least out of place, or in conflict with the sense and admirably dramatic finish of the episode, which will not suffer by comparison with any predecessor of any school.

At the close of the duet Tannhäuser leaves the stage, and

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the Landgrave finds Elizabeth and bids her prepare for the reception of the whole court to witness a contest between various bards—amongst whom Tannhäuser will of course be found. Elizabeth will have to crown the victor. The pageantry which now follows, accompanied by the famous assembling march, is of its kind unequalled in the annals of opera.

457. THE LANDGRAVE.

The Tournament of Song brings us to perhaps the most connected suite of melody in all WAGNER'S works. The march, which so largely contributes to the popularity of this opera, moves on with a rhythm and a richness worthy of the gorgeous display of pages in mauve, scarlet, white, and purple—of ladies with delicately contrasted court trains of canary-yellow, blue, dove-grey, with touches of crimson velvet, plumes, and blaze of jewels; troops of knights with retainers steel-clad with shining helmet and falchion. On a throne the Landgrave takes his seat, with Elizabeth, the Queen of the Song Tournay, at his right. The bards with their harps are ranged in front, and seated, Tannhäuser amongst them; and as the rainbow crowd continues to defile slowly into the spacious hall, and seems likely to fill every part of it, a joyous chorus takes up the burden of the march and pours forth the most exhilarating strains in honour of the Landgrave and the approaching festival of song—not a touch of foreboding, not a trace of sadness to warn us of

458. THE PROCESSIONAL MARCH.

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the impending catastrophe. The music runs chiefly in the metallic major key of five sharps, full of exulting joy and expectant triumph.

459. THE MINSTREL'S MUSIC.

We now approach a scene which almost every critic has found to be a disappointment. The music improvised by the bards is considered dull. It might have been less stiff and more melodic. Even Wolfran's music, usually, at least, as fine and melodic, if not more so, than Tannhäuser's own, is tame and formal, and so is Walter's, but it seems to us all this is for a purpose. The splendid assembling melody just traversed passes into the arid and artificial praise of woman's love, as a thing too exquisitely exalted to be approached; or in fact, to have anything to do with the senses at all. The conception and the language are both exaggerated and false, and the arid music betrays its real heartlessness; it is the fitting prelude to the over-glowing and wild bound of sensuous melody which is about to break from Tannhäuser in vindication of the senses.

460. CHIVALRY, THE WORLD, THE CHURCH.

The exact *casus belli*, or triangular conflict, between Chivalry, the World, and the Church, is here caught and stated for us with quite surprising force. Chivalry in its religious mood converted every woman into a VIRGIN MARY. The praises of Love had then to be sung in this attenuated atmosphere, in which the senses

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could not breathe. It was like playing *Othello* without the Moor of Venice; it was the futile attempt to wed the natural love of the sexes to the Church's ideal of celibate purity, and the greater the collision with reality and practice, the stronger, the more conventional became the futile attempt. Love is the subject proposed to the bards in competition. Wolfran declares that in the presence of Elizabeth's beauty his heart dissolves in prayerful dreams. There is the source of all delight—the balm of all grief. He aspires to worship and die for the lady, but views with horror the notion of rashly troubling her with any wild desires. This little piece of strained humbug, sung by one who probably does not believe a word of it, is greeted by the crowd, who certainly do not practise it, with much applause: "We praise thy noble song!" Tannhäuser now replies; at first keeping within bounds, and giving a natural expression to a legitimate sentiment, he remarks that he, too, has felt the love of woman, but that, so far from not troubling her with desire, he conceives that this is, after all, the root of the matter; that if a man could not understand that, he could not know much about love. For his part, he glories in it, and has no fear or misgiving about it.

It is characteristic of Tannhäuser that, having spoken this half truth, he goes no farther; and Walter cuts in with the other half truth, and utters his platitudes about virtue, meaning by virtue continence. He denounces the

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notion that woman's love ought to have anything to do with the senses, and thus places his own conception in antagonism with Tannhäuser's.

Such, indeed, was the work and the influence of the Church of the period. There was no one to step forth and lift the two half truths into a higher region of holy and healthy unity—by proclaiming the consecration of sense by affection and self-restraint, instead of its extinction or corruption by abstinence and emotional mysticism. No one could then and there solve the problem which Protestantism has after all only half solved, retaining a theory but half consistent with its practice, and the consequences to Tannhäuser and Elizabeth were quickly fatal.

If the Venus-berg had done nothing else for Tannhäuser, it had at all events taught him one lesson that he could never forget—"THE TREMENDOUS EMPIRE OF THE SENSES." On hearing them alternately ignored and trampled upon, he rushes impetuously on the wings of a strange knowledge into furious opposition, and, casting all caution to the winds, breaks though the formal stupidity of his rivals into an assertion of what is, at least, true and blameless in itself, that man as man is constituted specially to love woman as woman. The fine trait of Elizabeth's mute instinctive assent to this passionate assertion is dramatic and touching—it is the unconscious purity of a simple-minded and pure woman assenting to a natural fact.

461. TANNHÄUSER SPLITS ON THE ROCK.

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She is soon taught better by the burst of indignant horror that breaks from the conventional crowd—"Silence his madness!" Poor Tannhäuser, thus bullied by the crowd, condemned by his friend Wolfran, defied to single combat, loses his head, and utters the exaggerated statement of what, if it had been left alone, would after all have been true and fair enough, though not the whole truth about love. Forced into opposition, and wild with admiration and desire for Elizabeth, he flies at a bound into the praise of Venus. The songs of the enchanted mountain are in his ears, and force themselves in wild snatches through the agitated orchestra—his voice climbs boldly up through the famous and free melody, in which he praised Venus at the moment of his departure. Alas! it is also the knell of that noble love for Elizabeth, which might have lifted him, but which he must also shortly abandon for ever; and Tannhäuser, the too bold champion of nature and nature's rights, falls, in the moment of his perfervid but almost healthy protest, a victim to the combined incapacity of the Church and Chivalry to reconcile without emasculating the secular and religious impulses of our nature.

At the unhappy name of Venus in Tannhäuser's song, all the accursed and sensual horrors of the Venus-berg are instantly associated with the minstrel knight. Elizabeth herself perceives that his position is untenable. The dying mythology at once hurls Tannhäuser from the heaven of Christian grace. Swords are drawn, and the saintly Eliza-

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beth can only throw herself between her outcast lover and his would-be murderers! Tannhäuser has now got thoroughly confused himself. He has been irresistibly impelled to speak an irresistible truth. Yet that truth in that form was evidently sin—deserved punishment—cried for penance and divine pardon. "THE TREMENDOUS EMPIRE OF THE SENSES," "the strong man armed," begins to confess a mightier power,—"THE IMMENSE SUPREMACY OF THE SOUL!" Tannhäuser grovels in the dust before an injured saint, an infuriated mob, an offended God.

I shall not attempt to describe the glowing pages of chorus in which this complex situation is rendered. Just as the scene is growing a little too tense and harrowing, without in the valley is heard a chant of young pilgrims. It is the refrain of the great subject of the overture which binds the whole of the opera together with a quite magical unity. Before that sweet, unearthly, familiar strain, a silence falls upon the turbulent citizens in the great hall. Some repair to the wide open verandah to see the pilgrims. But to Tannhäuser's highly-wrought mood that chant is as the voice of heaven—he, too, remembers his sudden vow to become a pilgrim and repair to Rome, where, at the hands of the Holy Father, after due penance, he may perchance find some dawn of hope, and be purged from his grievous sin.

462. TO ROME!

So, as he passes swiftly out of the hall to meet the

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pilgrims, with a great shout from the assembled throng, "*To Rome!*" the second act closes.

Act III.

It is the wayside crucifix of the first act—no longer a scarcely solemn or pathetic object, lost in the thronging glories of the bright morning woods in spring, but now, in the fall of the year, seen in the autumn twilight, it stands out grim and dark, and all the scene has grown sad and sombre. Wolfran advances towards the shrine in search of Elizabeth, who is, since the departure of Tannhäuser, ever to be found praying there alone, and alone she still would be. She mutely waves Wolfran aside, thanking him for his friendly sympathy, but relapsing into silent and absorbed prayer. On the evening wind comes again the floating chant of the pilgrims, now returning from Rome. The maiden rises, and listens in startled excitement and intense expectation. The sweet and majestic chant reaches its climax as the pilgrims defile before the crucifix. Elizabeth watches each hooded figure with increasing despair. *He* is not there. As the last passes she feels that the bitterness of death has come and passed with them, and, falling upon her knees, she prays that her last earthly longings may be forgiven, and that, white and free from stain, she may be soon received into the heavenly kingdom, and that her beloved may also find grace at the last. Once more Wolfran

463. THE WAYSIDE CRUCIFIX.

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approaches her respectfully, but she needs not his support. Her step does not falter now; the last touch of human frailty has left her; she is sensible to no earthly blandishments, the heavenly bridegroom has claimed her for his own, and gentle death will soon lead her into his presence.

As we listen to the exquisite stream of pure melody which flows once only from the flutes and clarionets as Elizabeth slowly descends into the valley and disappears towards the Wartburg, we are irresistibly reminded of Longfellow's exquisite translation:

> O Land! O Land! for all the broken-hearted
> The mildest herald by our fate allotted
> Beckons, and with inverted torch doth stand
> To lead us with a gentle hand
> Into the land of the great departed,
> Into the Silent Land!

This solemn and peaceful scene is followed by one even more composed and restful—more dignified it could scarcely be. The terrible sorrow and sublime resignation of Elizabeth seem to have weaned Wolfran from all his earthly desires, and he has ceased almost to regret the love of Elizabeth for himself, whilst committing her to the care of Heaven in his incomparable song to the evening star. In the deepening twilight he prays that, as she so wills it, she may be taken from a world of pain and sorrow into the eternal joy, and there, in the trackless fields of light, which seem to mortals the very homes of the sweet and solemn starlight, she may find the heavenly and fadeless day.

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We have all this time been unconsciously, and with consummate dramatic art, prepared for the final climax.

464. ENTER TANNHÄUSER.

Wolfran checks his harp, as a wayworn man of grief approaches; his emaciated form, his wild eyes, his squalor and unsteady gait, tell of immense sufferings and privation, bodily and mental.

Wolfran scarcely recognises Tannhäuser in the strange figure before him.

"Who art thou, solitary one?"

"Who am I? I know *thee* well—Wolfran, the famed minstrel."

The touch of bitterness reminding his friend of the artificial song of love which called forth his own passionate and disastrous protest, is retaliated with—

"Darest thou retrace thy steps unpardoned?"

"Fear not, my famous bard, I seek not thee; but I do seek a man to show me the way."

"What way?"

"The way to the Venus-berg."

465. TANNHÄUSER'S CONFESSION AND DEATH.

In another instant Tannhäuser has passed from bitterness to confession; and as Wolfran inquires concerning his pilgrimage, he unburdens himself freely in the following magnificent oration, which, as a simple piece of dramatic declamation, deserves a high rank. We repeat, that WAGNER'S drama is of its kind equal to its music; it will repay careful study, and we

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cannot forbear giving here a free translation, with connecting narrative:

"Listen! Wolfran, listen! With a heart more fervently penitent than ever was heart of pilgrim, I sought the road to Rome An angel—ah, woe is me!—had rooted out the pride of sin; but I longed to expiate that pride in deep abasement. I longed for the grace denied me, in order to ease the bitterness of that angel's tears for me, a sinner! The rough way selected by the most contrite pilgrim seemed all too easy for me. When he chose the soft grass for his bare feet, I sought the sharp stones and thorny places for mine. When he slaked his thirst in cool rivulets, I only drank in the fiery torrent of the sun. Whilst he prayed to heaven, I shed my life-blood in honour of the Most High. When the travellers rested in the inn, I was stretched without in ice and wind and snow. I went like a blind man through the magic plains of Italy. I did it all because I thought, in dying to the world, by contrition, to soothe the weeping of my dear angel. I arrived at Rome. I approached the holy throne. I bowed in prayer and self-abasement on the threshold of the sanctuary. The morning broke. I heard a chiming of bells and a chorus of celestial voices; the whole temple seemed filled with praise and fervent joy, for plenary indulgence, grace and pardon were promised to the multitude of penitents. Then I saw him, God's Vicar upon earth! We grovelled in the dust at his feet. I saw him give pardon to thousands of sinners like me, and they rose up absolved, and oh, how happy! And I drew near. My head was bared; I smote on my breast; I said, 'God be merciful to me, even to me: God forgive the criminal pleasures—the crime of the senses, the unsubdued desires.' In my agony I implored the Holy Father to loose me from the chain of my sins; and God knows my soul was pierced through at that moment with many sorrows. And His Vicar whom I besought made answer thus, Wolfran, only thus: 'If thou hast shared these criminal joys—if thy heart has been seared with Hell's own fire—if thou hast been in the Venus-berg, there is an end of it: thou art damned for ever. Even as this dry staff of my crozier will never blossom more, so neither shall salvation ever blossom for thy soul in hell.' At these words I fell senseless to the earth as one dead. When I came to myself I was alone in the vast temple. It was night; I heard a pilgrim chant of joy and salvation; those holy strains filled me with horror. I fled from that lying hymn; it fell chill upon my shuddering soul, and seemed to freeze my heart to ice. Then suddenly, with irresistible violence, I felt

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myself drawn back to that burning enchantress who had once filled me with such unspeakable ecstasy. I return to thee, sweet Venus—my only consoler. I come, I come to thy nightly entrancing pleasure, to thy glittering court, where all thy beauties smile to greet me, for evermore, throughout eternity!"

"Unhappy man!" cries Wolfran, who sees that his friend is under a spell and going mad. He tries to stop his growing exaltation as he invokes Venus.

"Thou hearest, my love, my goddess! All men curse me. Guide thou my steps." The white Venus cloud begins to pass over the stage; then comes the wild cry of the sirens, now no longer soft and seductive as of yore, but almost harsh and strident, like the voices of women roughened in the bitter life of the barren senses. But Tannhäuser's head is gone.

"Ah! heavenly perfume—delicious voices! I am yours! Come, come, ye nymphs; I see your joyous forms! Crown me with pleasures! I feel the secret fire in all my veins. I know their soft low light—it is the enchanted mist of the Venus-berg—the reign of love!" At that moment the vision of Venus, stretched on a bed of roses, appears for an instant, and Tannhäuser is with difficulty restrained by the strong arms of Wolfran from rushing towards her. For the last time she calls him. But now songs of the pilgrims are heard in the valley—the Venus-berg was but an enchantment of the senses. Tannhäuser listens and gazes transfixed as a funeral procession draws near. At the sound of prayer Venus and her crew vanish. The Pagan deity is after all ousted by the Christian martyr. Elizabeth has prayed for Tannhäuser with her dying breath. Elizabeth has interceded for him on earth: his good angel in heaven, his victorious saint. Her prayers have been heard. For a moment only the magical form of Venus had flashed out and passed—another form now fills the heart and brain of the ruined knight. Elizabeth, lying dead upon her bier, is borne in. As the fair corpse, strewn with flowers, is set down, the sun breaks out and reveals a glorious summer day. The pilgrim strain rises once more to heaven, and Tannhäuser, whilst the last dimness clouds his eyes, worn with disease and suffering, staggers to the bier and falls prostrate in death by the side of his beloved. A line of young pilgrims bearing a budding staff, in token of his supreme forgiveness, pass singing:

"Blessed is the pure virgin who has joined the glorious company of the angels. Blessed is the sinner for whom she has prayed and won heaven's pardon." And then the united assembly reply, re-echoing

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the great Pilgrim Chorus, heard first in the overture, and last over the corpses of the faithful lovers:

> "The sinner has received the pardon of heaven;
> He enters into the rest of the blessed ones."

. . . . .

It would be difficult to add to such a close as this. The parable seems at last fully worked out. The noblest nature, filled with the genuine experiences of both extremes of life, seeks for guidance and counsel at the hands of Rome, and is rejected. The last incompetence of Roman Catholicism to deal with life has been demonstrated, and the *reductio ad absurdum* of its method is reached in the Pope's heartless and stupid speech. Certain sins by Rome's decree are venial, others are mortal; man has made, and man, in the name of God, administers the scale of punishment which he has made. The whole system is here exhibited as not alive, but mechanical, and as a gross outrage upon the rights of the human conscience and the spiritual facts of the soul. In Tannhäuser this inhuman management produces despair and worse crime, when a higher vision is suddenly opened up, and above the dream of the senses, above the anathema of the Pope—somehow inseparably connected with human love, but with human love deprived at last of all its lower conditions—the sweet pardon comes home, as it were, on the wings of angels, and the weary pilgrim, rejected on earth but received in heaven, passes to rejoin the best beloved in the peace of God.

466. PHILOSOPHY OF TANNHÄUSER.

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IX.

LOHENGRIN.

THOSE who see TRANSUBSTANTIATION, the blood real or the blood royal, or the "HOLY GRAIL," only through the gross controversial mists of the Reformation, see but the prose. The poetry of the great Romanist dogma shines out in that cycle of Middle-Age legends, derived originally from the Welsh bards, into which the French Trouvères poured the spirit of the new chivalry, leaving the later Germanic singers to invest their lays with a spiritual, not to say theological, significance. In the legend of Parsifal and the Holy Grail, transubstantiation is no longer seen as the lowest degradation to which a miracle-monger can subject a pathetic symbol. It rises at once to the highest level of poetic inspiration. It becomes the immortal expression of the courage, self-sacrifice, and purity of the ideal Christian knight.

467. THE BLOOD ROYAL OR REAL.

The story of the sacred quest, and the guardianship of the "real blood" in its varied developments, sums up

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not only the noble impulses of the Middle Ages, but some of the most central needs and religious passions of human nature. The dramas that circle round it are the dramas of our common endeavour, patience, failure, and aspiration. The Incidents belong to an eternally recurring class. The Characters remain in their vast outline so many phases of the human soul. The Moral is the moral of human life as it repeats itself, essentially the same under all Protean changes of time and place. It is this representative quality that has so impressed WAGNER with the force and superiority of legend or the mythus to present, in a condensed and simple form, the feelings common to our nature. There they appear raised, by situations purely ideal, to their highest degree of intensity. The love of all women is in Elsa,—their jealousy and revenge is in Ortrud; the *abandon* and despair of all noble and blighted natures in Tannhäuser, their nobility and thirst for action in Lohengrin.

468. THE DEPTH OF THE SYMBOL AND ITS LEGEND.

But the reader must now grasp the elements of the narrative itself, as it rises out of a double legend, into that peculiar distinctness which the genius of WAGNER has impressed upon his version of the "Sangrail" and the "Knight of the Swan."

The cup of the holy blood was that in which our Lord had consecrated the elements at His last supper. To the

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eye of faith that cup had never perished. It existed still;

469. THE STORY OF THE BLOOD. it ever would exist—blessed by the Lord Himself, filled with His blood, the very visible incarnation of His unspeakable love in its sublime purity and sacrifice. There, in one glowing symbol, is the whole parable of the sacramental claim. Literalised by Rome, it reads thus:—"On earth, in a material cup, is the real presence, dwelling for ever incarnate, with men."

That dogma is the secret of all sacerdotalism. The quest might belong to the people; but the guardianship of the sacred elements, attributed in the myth to the holy knights, belonged, in reality, to the holy Church, before whose mystic thrall all Christian knights bowed down.

Joseph of Arimathea had been the first guardian; but for the sins of the world, as faith grew cold, the holy cup had been caught away by angels to heaven, only to be restored to Titurel, the anointed knight.

Even so does divine truth appear, disappear, and reappear, as the world is able and worthy to entertain it.

On the summit of a lofty mountain, clothed with luxuriant forests, somewhere, as the Trouvères supposed, on the confines of India, or the Visigoth mountains of Spain, stood a glittering pile. There Titurel, with a band of chosen knights, kept the Holy Grail in the palace of Montsalvat. Those shining domes of clear agate were lifted with opal columns. The walls glowed with Oriental jasper; the shrine was bright with gold and precious stones; the per-

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fume of myrrh and aloes floated through its corridors, and the fertility of Eden surrounded its precincts with tropical fruits and flowers.

The imagery of Montsalvat is a strange mixture of Asiatic mystery and Eastern pomp, wedded to the Catholic shrines of the West. It is a Mont St. Michel in the tropics. The knights of the Grail embodied exactly the Church's conception of the warrior's highest mission. Her knight was a religious mystic, but he appeared constantly in the world, and stood like an impassable barrier between injured innocence and brutal force. Lohengrin is the shining embodiment of the moral force, represented by the Church of the Middle Ages, which enabled the unarmed monk to dash princes and proud monarchs from their thrones. The knight of the Sangrail came as the angel of God, with all an angel's might, and more than an angel's sympathy. He shows himself a man amongst men, but the mystery of Montsalvat was upon him. He could not justify or explain his actions; he could not reveal his name. The question, "By what authority doest thou these things?" will ever be met by the noblest natures with sealed lips. The "things" are their own authority. Every spiritual mission justifies itself. When its prophet stoops to explain, the hour of his retirement is at hand. Like Lohengrin, his power is at an end, he must return to Montsalvat, and leave a world

470. MONTSALVAT AND LOHENGRIN.

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to which so much has been given, and which has proved itself worthy of so little.

Titurel was succeeded by Parsifal, and Lohengrin was the son of Parsifal. It is at this point that the Germanic legend of the Knight of the Swan, so popular at the mouths of great rivers, weds itself to the wider myth of the Saint Grail.

471. THE SWAN LEGEND AND ELSA.

An innocent woman of high rank is accused by brutal conspirators of a high crime. She sees in a dream a knight of superhuman splendour who promises to be her champion. In the hour of her trial he appears, drawn by a swan in a mystic bark from the open sea. He enters the mouth of the river, lands, and conquers. He weds her on one condition, that she will never ask his name or his credentials. She promises, but at last cannot resist the temptation; she urges the fatal question. The swan reappears, and the knight is borne away from her for ever.

472. LOHENGRIN PRELUDE.

WAGNER's opening prelude to *Lohengrin* resumes the clear phases of the coming drama. It is a wondrous sound epitome, arousing the emotions appropriate to the subtle depth of each phase, and shaking the soul of the listener with a certain keen hunger of expectant curiosity. It is like one of those crystal globes in BURNE JONES's masterpiece, *The Days of Creation*.

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The essence of the day to be born is there, as the essence of *Lohengrin* is in the mystic prelude.

But more various and suggestive is the musical language of pure emotion than any image or painted symbols of crystal globes and angels, for the musical strain provides the single emotion in its fulness and indivisibility, which fires a whole set of symbols, and animates a whole series of incidents.

473. THE CONCEPTION OF "LOHENGRIN" ANALYSED.

You may state *Lohengrin* as a STORY, as a PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTION, as a SYMBOL, or as a pure METAPHYSICAL IDEA, and music shall seize and inspire each statement. As a STORY, it is the knight coming from the remote and mystic shrine of Montsalvat to the banks of the Scheldt to rescue a forlorn maiden, entering into the din and turmoil of war and human passion, and at last retiring to the inviolable sanctuary.

As a PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTION, it sums up the two poles of human nature—the passion for *contemplation*, and the *passion for action*. In the Middle Ages, the monastic solitude, with its visions and its mysteries, stood for one; chivalry, with its knights-errant and its bloody wars and adventures, stood for the other; and in the legends of the Sangrail the two are united, but the conception is a representative one, and eternally, philosophically true to human nature. Man dreams and aspires; he seeks isola-

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tion; he places leagues of ocean, continents, impenetrable forests, between his soul and the work-a-day world. He ascends his holy mountain, his Montsalvat, and dwells in its resplendent halls, on the very confines between heaven and earth. Still, even there he seeks for confraternity in his isolation. There are with him others, Titurel, Parsifal, the knights of the holy quest, of the San Grail, of the blood which is the life thereof. But to what end this science of contemplation? to what end this heart alternately refrained and expanded, these muscles so firmly knit, these limbs so proudly clad in shining mail, this bright sword lying idle in its scabbard? Made strong and holy, for what but for action? Prepared, but not made perfect, except through suffering. The return of the holy knight to the struggles of the world is at once the recognition of the spiritual force embodied by the Church, and the condemnation of the monastic ideal of solitude and prayer. The larger moral missed by the Church is caught by the popular myth. The discipline of life is not apart from human love, however shining may be the summits of Montsalvat.

The training of the heart must lie in the full expansion of love. Lohengrin loves Elsa.

The training of the hand must be in knightly deeds done amongst men. Lohengrin slays the oppressor.

In the midst of glory come pain and separation, yet the experience and trial have both been needful; and though the latest note be one of sorrow, yet will the white swan,

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Death, lead the good knight safely through the rolling waters to his rest.

As a SYMBOL, the descent of the mystic knight, the glimpse of his supernal graces vouchsafed to earth, and his withdrawal to the mysterious region, is all imaged by the vision of the holy cup borne of angels, which to the expectant saint comes from out the remote distance—"Rose-red, with beatings in it as if alive, till all the white walls of the cell are dyed with rosy colours leaping on the wall, and then . . . the Grail pass'd."—*Tennyson.*

As a pure METAPHYSICAL idea, Lohengrin stands for the dawn of sensibility; as when one awakes after long sleep, and, slowly recovering consciousness, begins to feel life in all one's limbs, and to be keenly conscious of the sun, and flowers, and of food, and wine—all the activities and stimulants of life. Then, after a climax of consciousness to pain or to pleasure has been reached, the slow returning of sensibility into the realm of unconscious sleep. Life in the work-a-day world has been taken away, and the white swan of sleep has borne the weary one back to the dreamland of Montsalvat.

474. ANALYSIS OF PRELUDE.

And now let us come upon the Prelude, and see how it closes with Lohengrin under one and all of these aspects—how it kindles through music the one and indivisible tide of emotion that flows through the series of dramatic, philosophical,

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symbolical, or metaphysical conceptions, which I have referred to.

And here, if not before, our powers of description may well fail. The orchestra alone can take their place. But who has not heard, in the shrill breathing of the opening violins and flutes,

> The slender sound,
> As from a distance beyond distance,
> . . . O! never harp was born,
> Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch with hand,
> Was like that music as it came.

How it remains for long in the upper air, as loth to leave the shining heights of Montsalvat, then steals cautiously down to parley with some earthlier whispers. Like Brünnhilde, the Walküre stooping from Walhalla to listen to the plaint of human lovers, even so is the high sound drawn to earth. The warm tints of the sunny genial world, with all its lights and shadows, "all the wealth, and all the woe," begin to glow and mantle in the richly-swelling tide of sound. One by one all the instruments of the orchestra are gathered in as the deeper notes of the descending scale climb downwards, and the varied voices of pain and forebodings and excess of tender love are woven into the mighty fabric of suspended harmonies, until with a vast shattering of silver cymbals the climax is reached and repeated, and then the little far-off voice of bitterness like a heart-pang shoots through the rich and laden atmosphere of changing and dissolving sound, and we suddenly are conscious that the

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power of the spell is waning, the satisfaction of a finished work sinks in upon the soul, lately the scene of such stormy and conflicting emotions, and we heave a long and peaceful sigh as the phrase ends with a perfect major close. But at that moment, like Elsa awaking from her deadly swoon, we are aware that the shining knight is gone. The music is caught up higher and higher, further and further "the slender sound" from "a distance beyond distance" recedes as it came, and as the ear clings to the last faint ethereal whisper in the upper air, we perceive that the knight of the Sangrail has passed.

Act I.

As the last whisper of shrill violin harmonics dies away, the curtain rises upon the grassy lowlands in the neighbourhood of Antwerp. The river winds away into the distance, broadening out to the dim and hazy sea. The whole scene lies glowing and palpitating in the splendour of a summer day, and Henry, the King of Germany, seated under a spreading oak, holds his court with military pomp. The foreground is crowded with knights and retainers in splendid costumes.

475. BY THE SCHELDT.

A blast of trumpets sounds, and a herald steps forward, and in a musical phrase closely imitative of the natural

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inflection of a voice bawling out loud, proclaims his sovereign's will, which is, that an army should at once muster to serve the king in his foreign wars. The enthusiasm of the people is checked by the very business-like way in which the King rises, and in dignified Wagnerian recitative reminds his loyal people of their internal discords, and especially of their immediate disagreement about the Overlordship of Brabant itself, and he then calls upon the leading noble, Frederic Count of Telramund, to show the cause. This ambitious man, who has married Ortrud, a lineal princess of Friesland, and who aspires to the vacant throne of Brabant, then steps forth and tells how that the late ruling Duke made him guardian of his two children, Gottfried and Elsa; how that Elsa, who should have been his own bride, conspired with some unknown lover, doubtless eager for the crown, and treacherously in a wood made away with her brother, Gottfried; how he, the Count, then married Ortrud and claimed the throne for himself. He then proceeds to arraign Elsa for the murder of her brother, and here the legend of the swan is slipped in.

476. ENTER THE KING.

The discerning reader may as well know that Gottfried has been turned into a swan by the magic arts of the wicked Frisian Princess Ortrud, who aspires with Frederic Telramund to the vacant throne. A thrill of horror runs through the assembly on learning the charge now made against Elsa, and a highly expressive cry bursts forth from the people. The first crisis is steadily worked up with all the dramatic

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art and patient analysis of the situation so characteristic of WAGNER'S genius. Nothing is forgotten. The King bids the Count consider the awful nature of the charge. The Count grows more violent in his assertions, and begins to impute all those base motives to Elsa which are indeed his own.

The King reproves him judicially, and recalls the controversy to facts with "Summon the maid!" The herald now proclaims a judicial trial, and the royal will is emphasized by a great unsheathing and flourishing of swords. In answer to the general summons, Elsa, in pure white, accompanied by her maidens, is seen approaching. The crowd parts as she slowly moves like one in a trance not seeing or hearing. A cry of subdued admiration and sympathy greets her, and is immediately followed by the first Elsa motive in the orchestra—that strain of pure and pathetic melody, inseparably connected with her innocence and her vision of Lohengrin. The crowd are half won over.

477. ENTER ELSA.

"How like an angel of light! He who accuses her must surely prove her guilt." She stands face to face with the King. In answer to his questions she inclines her head, but speaks not when asked to confess her guilt. With a weary, dreamy sigh come the words "Alas! my poor brother!" The King and the people are staggered, when Elsa raises her head, and in a strain that must ever thrill

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all hearers into rapt silence, she relates, with eyes dreamy and fixed, how, an unprotected orphan, she has often prayed for a heavenly guide.

The crowd stare wonderingly.

The King, a little impatient, breaks in with "Elsa, defend thyself!" Now from the orchestra softly streams the opening subject of the prelude, the dream music of Montsalvat. Thither indeed at such a moment has the spirit of Elsa been caught away. Her face begins to glow; as she is lifted up to the celestial contemplation, she describes the form of the shining knight who appeared in answer to the orphan's prayer, and ends with the passionate apostrophe, "My guardian, my defender, thou shalt be my champion!"

Her prayer is echoed by the excited multitude. The King alone resists the spell. Instantly the rival Count seizes his occasion to declare that she calls for her paramour, and that he is prepared to meet him in single combat. Not a man steps forth. The wavering crowd are evidently struck by his determined attitude.

The King expresses confidence in the Count, and things are beginning to look black indeed for Elsa.

Still the King will not judge—Heaven alone must decide—Telramund is pledged to fight. All eyes turn to Elsa. She accepts the challenge, and is asked for her champion. She grows dreamy, speaks again of her knight, and offers herself up to him in a kind of ecstatic prayer. Her

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spell is once more on the inconstant crowd. "A noble prize! who will the victor be?"

The solemn moment has arrived. The herald again steps forth, and with declamatory accents, simulating the natural inflections, he calls for Elsa's champion. There is no answer, and the dropping notes of the trombone and violoncello *pizzicato* admirably render the pause of suspense. Elsa passes slowly from tranquillity to agitation. The crowd begins to side against her, the hostile court exults. Elsa turns to the King, and implores for one more summons. Again the trumpets sound, again the herald cries; again an ominous silence, broken only by one soft trumpet note, a still softer horn note, then five taps, like fate, on the kettle-drum, suspended by rests. "The Heavens are silent, she is doomed," cries the mob, and Elsa sinks on her knees in passionate prayer—a prayer of exquisite distress, which is soon changed as her vision brightens to a growing ecstasy.

478. WILL HE COME?

"O Lord, send my knight!
Send him again stainless and white.
Let me behold that form of light!"

The tremulous violins sustain and suspend the stretched emotion, whilst a strange shudder passes through the crowd. A group on the banks are now looking seaward. Something is stealing out of the hazy distance. Little cries arise, then shouts, and, "Look!

479. THE SWAN AND THE KNIGHT.

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a marvel!" then a confused roar of voices, and a rush and mingling together of the gaily-decked multitude. "A swan! a fair swan! yonder a bark—the swan drawing the bark. A knight, a full fair knight, shining in resplendent armour. A helm of light—see how he gains the shore!" He comes, and from the crowd behind who cannot see—"What? where? there! look! who is it?" Such are the exclamations of this eight-part chorus, which renders better than any description, the exciting and rapturous scene which now unfolds itself, as the crowd parts to right and left, and the knight, the unknown knight, who is Lohengrin, steps from the swan-drawn bark, clad in shining silver mail from top to toe, and stands for a moment waving his adieu to the swan.

In that strain of unaccompanied melody, so famous, and so clear in its lofty, fearless simplicity, he announces his mission to the King, and in another moment Elsa is in his arms.

The first development of the parable is reached. Lohengrin has found the earthly counterpart to his mystic passion for the Holy Grail. He has heard from the lips of his queen those glowing words, "My hope! my solace, my hero, I am thine!" but in an instant, before surrendering himself, he guards his sacred identity with, "Never, as thou dost love me, ask from whence I came—never ask my race or name."

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With these words, the first ominous notes of pain, which recur again in the mouth of Elsa's rival, Ortrud, and which

480. SURGIT AMARE ALIQUID. are henceforth identified with the fatal question, and weighted with the woe of the final catastrophe, are heard; and the phrase is followed by that other famous recurring strain, expressive of the weird mystery that envelops Lohengrin, and for ever separates him from his earthly surroundings, even at the moment when he seems most immersed in and identified with all human interests of love and war; and the warning is twice repeated.

In a transport of confiding love, Elsa promises everything. Then Lohengrin clasps her to his breast, with the simple but intense words wedded to the simplest, clearest, musical phrase, "Elsa, I love thee." The snatch of six part-chorus that now greets the pair, "O, sweet enchantment, wondrous love!" is a piece of rich and satisfying harmony, in which the leading melody, full of repose, rings high above the glowing chords and modulations upon which it is floated out.

But the champions already stand face to face, and whilst the ground is being measured out, bandy words of mutual defiance. Then the herald once more proclaims

481. THE DUEL. aloud the fight. The two rivals commit their cause to heaven. The King, for the first time, becomes thoroughly melodic and lyrical in his prayer, which

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is taken up by the whole assembly, in a full and overpowering chorus of considerable length, at the close of which, to the rattle of violins, the King draws his sword as the signal to begin.

Trumpets on the stage blare forth, and the combatants rush together. The indescribable close of the first act must be left to the reader's imagination or memory. Frederic falls before Lohengrin's sword, his life is magnanimously spared. Elsa's ecstasy, the intense passion of which silences the turbulent burst of chorus, surpasses in its fervour the famous "Robert, toi que j'aime!" itself a masterpiece of dramatic passion.

Nothing finer of its kind has ever been conceived than the phrase beginning on *G* above the line, "Joy, oh joy!" taking a new flight on *A*, yearning on that elevation for a still more intense expression; and at last scaling to the upper *B* in that bounding strain, at the close of which Elsa sinks exhausted upon Lohengrin's breast.

482. THE CLOSE OF ACT I.

A lesser artist would have here brought down the curtain, but the climax is rounded off superbly with ten more pages of chorus in eleven parts, in which the rage and astonishment of Count Frederic and Ortrud his consort, the thanksgiving of the king, the triumph of the knight, the ecstasy of Elsa, and the bewildered joy of the multitude, take up the heroine's strain, and work out her touching and melodic

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phrases in a symphonic form, and with a wealth of orchestration worthy of the finest parts of *Fidelio*. At the close of which Frederic falls in despair at the feet of his wife Ortrud, Lohengrin is carried off in procession on his own shield, and Elsa is raised high on the King's, o'erspread with gorgeous mantles, whilst the curtain descends amid the universal rejoicings.

Act II.

The moon is slowly rising over the square of the great Minster of Antwerp. On one side of it is ranged the palace brightly lighted up, and the sound of dance music mingles incongruously with the lonely gloom of the two dark figures cowering on the steps in front of the cathedral portals.

483. ORTRUD AND TELRAMUND.

In the long and stormy duet which follows, Frederic upbraids Ortrud with having goaded him on falsely to accuse Elsa of her brother's murder. He had weakly relied on his wife's lie and her magic to slay his rival. Now he had been thrown in the ordeal combat, and both were disgraced. His very sword was gone; he longs for it to slay his now detested consort. He raves like a second weak blubbering Ahab before a second wily and indomitable Jezebel. The woman now shows her reserve force; she tells the disgraced noble he has been defeated by magic. Had he but grazed the body of the unknown knight he might still have been

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victor, but now he could only paralyze his power by extorting the secret of his name. But one could accomplish this —Elsa, who on the morrow was to become a bride. There was not a moment to be lost. See, the music has died in the castle-halls, the revellers are gone.

Elsa will come forth presently on her balcony, to drink deep after the heated ball-room from the cool cisterns of the night. The stars are out. Hush! yonder casement opens. The Count is hurried off by his wife, who sits down on the steps with face buried apparently in her hands, but in reality with an eye as of a cat fixed on its prey, watching every motion of the snow-white figure slowly emerging, and now leaning out upon the balcony towards her.

484.
ELSA SINGS.

Soft summer night, and stars that seem to beat in time to yonder palpitating heart! Sweet wandering airs that fan the hot cheeks and happy restless spirit of maiden Elsa, who in solitude, balmy and silent, seeks to possess herself, and sound with full and satisfying thought the depths of her own happiness! In her most entrancing song, that floats out into the listening night, she seems to sound and sound, and to find those depths fathomless.

The short orchestral prelude recasts, in a meditative and subdued mould, some of the elements of the last triumphal chorus, and then, clear through the balmy midsummer moonlight, steals forth that enchanting song, in its opening

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phrases so strikingly like "Home, sweet home," but quite etherealised out of all resemblance to it as it proceeds.

But the snake in the dark now rears its slanderous head. Ortrud draws out of the deep shadow with a pathetic wail—"Elsa!" The startled girl is soon melted to pity for her prostrate rival, who craftily abases herself and pleads for her husband, whom she represents as deeply penitent, and eager for the royal favour of his happy rival.

485. LATET ANGUIS.

Elsa's own spirit, longing to overflow and impart happiness to all, is played upon by the sorceress, who is presently received with open arms by the trusting bride; and few can forget MADEMOISELLE TITIENS' magnificent burst of insulting malice and vengeance (during Elsa's momentary withdrawal) in which Ortrud summons the infernal gods whom she worships to accomplish her dark designs for the ruin of Elsa's love. Elsa finishes by inviting her two rivals to array themselves in splendid apparel, and grace with her the nuptial festival on the morrow. The gratitude of Ortrud now offers a return in the shape of good counsel. She artlessly advises Elsa not to marry a man she knows nothing of, but to extort the confession of his name at least; and the phrase of exalted passion in which Elsa naïvely answers the designing woman, that she cannot know what true love is if she can so suggest a doubt, is one of matchless freshness and full of tidal joy.

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But the poison has nevertheless been instilled, and the pair withdraw into the castle together. Frederic now creeps from his recess, where he has listened to all, utters a few strains of malignant joy. The day breaks; the long drawn-out and magnificent crisis of the second act is at hand.

486. THE MORNING COMES.

With the bright glancing of the morning light upon the cathedral, palace, and market-place, the soul passes into a new phase of emotions. Now we can see the meaning of the long, gloomy duet between Frederic and Ortrud, succeeded by the finely-contrasted night-scene of Elsa's love and Ortrud's treachery. The whole atmosphere of the night, laden with oppressive and exhausting passion, confined to three individuals, has prepared us for the fresh life of the day and the busy stir and tumult of feelings, in which the individual is at first lost in the crowded scene, and then steps forth into prominence, but still to carry on his action no longer in private, but *coram populo*.

The early dawn broadens to the cheery sound of horns answering each other, call for call, from the distant turrets of the city. Troops of men and girls visit the town Well, and pass to and fro in the market-place.

And now the castle gates open, forth come the royal trumpeters and blow the herald blast, summoning from right and left the nobles and retainers, to prepare for the presence of the King and the marriage festivities of Elsa and her knight.

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The straightforward chorus in which the gay groups greet each other is exhilarating, and seems to banish the last shade of night from the stage and of gloom from the heart.

487. THE CROWD ASSEMBLES.

The royal herald here steps forth, and with a flourish of trumpets announces to the hushed crowd that Frederic Telramund is an outlaw and traitor, and the people, like parrots, break out gaily into free cursing. Lohengrin is then proclaimed Guardian of Brabant, and the pliable chorus assents vociferously. The third message summons the nobles and retainers to the espousals of Elsa and the knight, which, of course, forms the subject for a longer chorus, in which the nobles profess themselves willing to follow the new Overlord to victory against the King's foes in a distant land. Observe the fine proportion of the herald's tripartite message, and the corresponding bursts of chorus which greet it. Again, the perfection of form is instinctively reached. What follows shows that acquaintance with popular movements, and that deep insight into political instincts of crowds subjected to the manipulation of agitators, of which WAGNER had some bracing experience when he himself appeared as a party orator during the rise of Saxony and the agitation of 1848.

There are always two sides to a question, and in every political movement always a reactionary minority.

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No sooner has the boisterously loyal chorus ceased, than a movement is apparent in the crowd, and four nobles detach themselves from the herd. "The land we are to quit!" cries one. "Against a foe who never threatened us," replies a second. "Such rashness will bring sorrow," says a third. "But who will dare oppose the King?" asks the fourth. "I!" cries Frederic of Telramund, stepping from his hiding-place.

488. CONSPIRACY.

He has indeed struck while the iron is hot, and, with the rapid instinct of self-preservation, he levels a blow at his victim, declares that all have been duped by magical arts, and that the unknown knight must be unmasked.

The crowd is but half won, but the poison of suspicion has been dropped, and the rapid kaleidoscope has already shifted, as the conspirators mingle in the gathering crowd of nobly-clad courtiers, and four royal pages appear in scarlet, yellow, and blue satin, and from their fresh girl voices a very song of the morning, "Make way! make way!" falls like dew and sunshine. It is one of those matchless fragments of clear and effectively simple harmony of which WAGNER seems to have an inexhaustible store. The cry from the Syrens in *Tannhäuser*, and the parting salute of the chorus in the bridal chamber, are but two of a hundred other examples. The glittering crowd now parts; splendid pages, in all the colours of the rainbow, make their way some to the open

489. ENTER PAGES.

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Minster door, others to range themselves on either side up the flight of steps. On the Palace balcony appear groups of beautiful children, and gaily-dressed women and cavaliers, and instalments of the royal procession are seen slowly winding from terrace to terrace, and approaching until the last flight of marble stairs lands them in the great square, which parts the procession from the Minster.

The stately music heralds in the appearance of Elsa; there is a long-drawn-out expectant sigh from the crowd, "She comes! with blushes glowing, on holy thoughts intent;" and Elsa, robed in bridal white, stands revealed to the whole assembly on the top of the Palace stairs. Then, slowly preceded and followed by her maidens, she advances in the procession, and crosses the market-place, whilst a rapturous chorus rends the air with, "Hail! Elsa of Brabant." As the strain culminates in one long shout, Elsa's foot is on the second step of the Minster stairs, when the treacherous Ortrud, who has formed one of her train, rushes forward, and pushes Elsa aside with "Stand back, Elsa! no longer will I follow you like a slave; the precedence is mine, you shall yet bow to me!" The tumult following these words, and the fierce colloquy between Elsa and Ortrud threaten to end in dire confusion; but WAGNER has the stages of development firmly in hand, and the transitions of incident and emotion never lose definite purpose and clear-

490. TREACHERY.

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ness. But one thing has again to be done. Doubt, suspicion of the unknown knight, has to be sown amongst the people, and matured in the heart of Elsa. In presence of such a rabid falcon as Ortrud, the poor white dove is only too powerless. The sorceress hurls at her, and at the assembled crowd, the charge of magic against the mysterious knight, insists upon his name, and with every taunt harps upon a question to which Elsa can give no answer, until the effect of her words, supported by the disaffected minority gathering round Frederic Telramund, is also seen in the maiden's passionate assertions of her utter trust, in the midst of her growing agitation. Suddenly the King and Lohengrin are announced, and the orderly progression of the drama is displayed by Frederic now stepping forth to confront his rival, as Ortrud had dealt with hers. It is the occasion for a new emphasis of the harrowing question, "Who is the knight" to whom the fortunes of Brabant, and Elsa, the jewel of Brabant, have been handed over in a moment of popular excitement? Let him stand forth and declare himself. "Yon shining knight, who has defied my sword, I here accuse of sorcery vile!" cries Frederic. At first the King is for passing the charge by, but Frederic's vehemence begins to win the crowd. The mystic knight is forced at last to declare that Elsa alone can put that question to him, that he will answer no other.

Fatal trust in the reticence of a woman! Had she not

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sworn never to ask? Could he not trust her? Heavenly trust in human frailty, how often hast thou been deceived! But a new stage has been reached. Elsa has heard; she has been shaken. The crowd expect to know. The poison is working in the blood of the bride. Frederic and Ortrud no longer care to interrupt the nuptial procession; their work is done. The organ peals forth from the open portals, and dies away in one long swell. All seems fair again. Elsa falls in tears on the breast of her knight. Ortrud stands aside with menacing arm uplifted; but in the tears of Elsa, and in the triumphant attitude of Ortrud, we read the doom of the injured bride, and the brief yet bitter ascendancy of the perfidious witch, so swiftly developed in the third and last Part.

491. POISON INSTILLED.

Act III.

There is but one more development in the character of Elsa, and the lines of the plot are complete. It is the struggle between her love and her curiosity, in which the last wins, and the *dénouement* passes to a terribly rapid close. That struggle is the centre and pith of the last act.

492. INTRODUCTION TO ACT III.

The famous introduction is instinct with the higher moral of the whole, which is inferred rather than felt out in the closing incidents of the drama. The music is all joyous stir, and knightly, chivalrous vigour. It is the shout of a

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multitude, it is the triumph of Lohengrin in his accomplished mission, in which his personal feelings and his fateful love are all put aside, and the larger aspect of his public work, in delivering Elsa, breaking up the malign enchantment, and restoring the little Prince Gottfried to his adoring people, is alone entertained.

In this stirring prelude, Lohengrin, not the lover, not the rival, but only the victorious knight of the Sangrail, seems to pass for the last time, enveloped in mystic glory before us, amidst the acclamations of the people; and the martial strains ring on, long after the hero has retired into the sacred rest of Montsalvat. But the joys and the sorrows of earth love must first be traversed.

493. THE BRIDAL CHORUS.

The empty bridal chamber is before us. On one side, a wide oriel window, through which we may see the summer moonlight, setting full upon the broad waters of the Scheldt. Voices—fresh voices—young girls. The doors open.

They enter as pages bearing torches. The King, nobles, and ladies, conduct Elsa and her knight to their bridal room. No more graceful scene, no more delicate and enchanting music, has ever been devised than the famous "Faithful and true! we lead you to where love triumphant shall crown you with joy." Eight ladies now take up a new and equally enchanting strain, which is in fact a poetical version of "whom God hath joined together"; and throughout the

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astonishing scene that follows, there reigns that singular elevation which must for ever separate this great love duet from such sensuous emanations as GOUNOD'S duet between Faust and Marguerite, or even WAGNER'S own delineation of passion in Tristan and Isolde.

Here everything is rare and sublimated.

The breath of a divine fervour lifts the knightly love of Lohengrin into an atmosphere of resplendent purity. As the last notes of bridal music die away, and the doors are closed upon the happy pair, that long-drawn-out duet begins, which in dramatic force alone will bear comparison with the finest bursts in *Romeo and Juliet.*

Merely as a psychological study it is worth dwelling upon, although it is not easy to give any idea of the truth and power of the music. The happy strain is o'er, "We are alone, who never were alone since first we met." The first notes of Lohengrin take us from the joyous conventional view of the bridal chorus, into the immediate privacy of the lovers.

494. *VIE INTIME.*

With the closing of the doors the atmosphere is shifted instantly. The melody is long drawn out, reposeful, and *intime.* He longs to know from her own lips whether she is happy. It is the old, imperious instinct, which is eager to seek a confirmation of its desire from a kindred soul.

It must hear from other lips what it already knows, and

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be thus twice blessed. "Happy!" cries Elsa, "that word my transport cannot measure!"

He is satisfied. She has given him back his feelings. He reminds her of the mystic love which brought him from the distance in her hour of need. She answers with a glimpse of her own vision. Now that she holds in her arms its realisation, it lends eloquence to her lips. She will be melted by his eyes, and flow about him like a river; she will be the little flower that kisses his feet as they move in the fresh grass.

She will live so. No, she will die, if in dying her life can become more his own. Is this love? is it all that love can say? No, it might still breathe his dear name. "Must it be for ever concealed from me?"

With the beseeching yet warning fifth from *E* to *A*— "Elsa!" Lohengrin would check her miserable rashness. But the woman is unbalanced by the intensity of her emotions, and with clinging urgency rushes on heedless. "How sweetly sounds my name from thy dear lips! but thy dear name shall never sound from mine!"

Will the spell never be broken? Will she never know? Again her lover would check her—"Oh, my sweet wife!"—

495. ONLY A WOMAN!

notes full of a sudden heart-pang. She heeds them not. She presses eagerly her face close to him, and clasps him in her arms, pleading impetuously, "Now, when none are near, whisper the word

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once softly; I only shall hear it." Lohengrin rises. His pain is too great, he needs diversion for his thoughts, he will put this dreadful moment aside. He lifts her from the couch; they are both standing by the oriel casement. He pushes it wide open. The moonlight streams in, and the soft air is full of strange and mystic perfumes. The air seems to grow chill. The music of shrill triplets on flutes and clarionets is here marvellous. The lovers stand between the moonlight and the dawn.

Alas! too true. The dream of love draws to its pallid awakening. For a moment they stand and inhale the odorous gales, which come streaming towards the knight as from the aromatic shrine of Montsalvat. Thoughts of its glory rush into his mind; his ecstatic nature wakes beneath them; he speaks what seem to her wild words of magic and mystery. A vague distrust mingles with her passion. His secret is fraught perchance with danger; he is not safe in her embrace; others may have mystic claims over him. Yet for a moment she is folded in a long embrace. Oh! could her folly all be forgotten! But no! the very inner woman comes out piteously with, "Let me—let me know!" The first stern notes from the knight are her answer: "No more of this, Elsa!" But she is quite wild, weakly wild. "Tell, oh tell me thy race, name, *all*!—I will never, never, tell it to anyone." It is a situation that must so often have

496. WHAT'S IN A NAME.

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repeated itself in the sad annals of humanity—the eager insatiable curiosity of woman, wrecking her own love and the love of one dearer to her than life itself. But the deepest side of the ideal knight is now fairly aroused. The sense of his duty, and the honour of the Sangrail! Before that consummate glory even the fire of love grows pale, and he tells his bride that wavering faith shall never be forgiven.

In a moment the unhappy Elsa is melted and contrite. She falls back on the simple human side of her love, and calls him to her arms, the only spell she knows.

497. AN EXCEEDING BITTER CRY.

But Lohengrin now proclaims that he belongs to a higher world, that none can add or take from the sacred order which owns his allegiance: that the bliss from whence he comes and whither he must return is ineffable, supernal.

Alas! Help! Heaven!

A cry of bitter jealous passion breaks from the frantic woman. She now feels, by a quick and sure instinct, that she is going to be left. One more typical situation. The plaint of all forsaken hearts is resumed in that despairing cry of Elsa; the time for asking his name seems past. The sense of overhanging doom is upon her. A vague terror shakes her whole frame. Is it the prophetic sense of the murderers that are even now with Frederic of Telramund, close outside her bedchamber? "Hark! there are sounds!"

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the knight's quick ear has heard, but she is gazing vacantly from the casement. Another terror now seizes her. Over the flooded river brightening to the dawn she catches sight of the ominous swan that brought her champion.

"The swan! the swan!" she screams like one possessed. "As when I first beheld his pinions shine—he comes for thee!" In her mad despair, trust, caution, even love itself, seems to give way to the impetuous fury of a wild creature; and this last consummate touch of human nature is simply overpowering on the stage. In the gentlest and tenderest of women, when pushed to extremity, there is often the imperious ferocity of a tiger at bay. Like a vindictive fury she flies at him with, "Declare thy race and name! Declare thy name—thy name! Where is thy home?"

At that moment the door is burst open, the murderers rush in. Elsa has just strength and presence of mind left, as the sudden revulsion of feeling takes possession of her relaxing limbs, to hand her lover his sword before she swoons away. With a touch of that enchanted blade, Lohengrin slays Frederic Telramund, then lifts the fainting form of Elsa on to the bed. Nobles and servitors enter. The knight, lost for ever to his love, with sad and solemn calmness bids them lead Elsa to the King, and promises there, in presence of all, to declare his name and home.

498. MURDER!

From the orchestra are heard the well-known notes of

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doom and mystery associated with Lohengrin's warning voice and Ortrud's spell.

499. THE KING IN COUNCIL.

The body of Frederic is removed, and a large curtain falls. The *mise-en-scène* of the prolonged duet being very shallow, a mere background against the foot-lights, the splendid vision of the broad prairie and banks of the winding Scheldt, with the hazy distant sea, is all ready, as in the opening act, to be revealed as the scene of the final situation, and almost immediately the curtain is withdrawn, and the opening pageant is again before us. The King is with his nobles under the spreading oak, the full morning sun is throbbing over river and mead. The assembling drum and trumpet music, of quite a perfunctory character, goes on for several pages, whilst the crowd distributes itself. It is an immense relief, and in its indifference rests the mind, and prepares us quite after the Shaksperean method for the exciting *dénouement* close at hand.

Mutual compliments now pass between the war-like monarch and his people. It appears that all are now prepared to join in his foreign war for the sake of Germany, and he is thanking them, when four nobles, bearing a corpse on a shrouded bier, enter and lay their burden at the King's feet. A thrill of astonishment and horror runs through the assembly as Telramund's friends are recognised in the four pall-bearers. To all inquiries they answer that

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the knight, the new guardian of Brabant, has sent them there with their burden.

Elsa is now seen approaching with a train of ladies, her head downcast in deepest sorrow, and the orchestra repeats a fragment of the motive which indicates the burden of the overhanging mystery. A new commotion in the crowd, and in another moment the knight of the Grail, fully armed in shining mail, as in the first act, strides into the midst, and stands before the King by the side of the shrouded bier. He is received with acclamations as the heaven-sent hero, but at once informs the King that all is changed now, that he has been doggedly arraigned by a section of the nobles to reveal his name and nation, and that at this moment he stands accused of foul murder. With these words he tears the pall from Frederick Telramund's corpse, and declares that in self-defence he slew him. His accents have hitherto been proud and defiant, but as he nears the subject of his great personal sorrow his tone changes, as though for a moment his inner mood were coloured by a tenderer and more regretful glow of feeling. As he proceeds to recount his bride's fault of faith, he recovers himself, and prepares to make the fateful announcement which is to free his bonds on earth, deprive him of his love, and restore him to the heaven of Montsalvat. Rising to his full stature, whilst his face glows with the dignified consciousness of his high

500. ENTER ELSA.

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origin, "I do not shrink from declaring my name and lineage. Ye shall know that I am more than the equal of the proudest noble here."

Then follows the masterly summary of the opening orchestral prelude, the leading parts being for the first time transferred in a consecutive melody to the hero. Then the legend of the Sangrail comes forth. The story of the shining halls of Montsalvat, with its consecrated knights; of his own mission to succour the oppressed, of the ineffable raptures of the blessed cup. The whole orchestration, now headed by the mystic knight, is like the actual unfolding in flesh and blood, or revelation to the eye of sense of what in the ethereal introduction was but an anticipatory vision.

501. "I AM LOHENGRIN."

The crystal globe has yielded up its secret. The parable of the Grail is about to be realised as the knight declares, "My father is crowned Parsifal, and I am LOHENGRIN!"

An immense emotion now takes possession of the monarch and his assembled lieges. "While I hear him," exclaims the King, "the holy tears course down my cheeks."

Poor Elsa staggers back—"'Tis all dark—dark! The earth reels! air—air—I cannot breathe!" Her fainting form is caught in Lohengrin's arms, longing, hungering for her the last time. "I felt thou wast the soul of all delight." It is almost the last touch of earthly passion. Elsa, awaking from her swoon, tries passionately to detain

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him. She despairs, she repents, she will do any penance. Too late! "Alas! my sweetest wife, I must leave thee for ever." It is his only, but inexorable reply. Elsa seems stunned: worn out for a moment with the intense emotion, she lies still in his arms. The knight commits her fainting to her ladies, then turns, and explains that he cannot lead the army to war; that he must return from whence he came.

But on the distant Scheldt the portent is now seen again. Groups crowd once more, and rush to the river banks. The cry of "The swan! the swan!" resounds on all sides. Lohengrin advances to the swan, now close on the banks with the empty skiff, and greets the fair white bird with a modified form of the first magic strain, which is so widely known as the "Swan" motive. But ere he ascends the bark he unlocks the riddle of the swan, and the mystery of the vanished Gottfried, Elsa's brother. He returns for a moment to fold his lost bride in one last embrace, to tell her, that had she been true, in a year her brother would have been restored, and her husband would not have been lost to her; that now, his ring, his horn, and his sword, alone can be left with her. These she must give to her brother when he appears. They are the sure means of victory; they will constitute him the leader and Overlord of his people. He then commits himself once more to the service of the Holy Grail, and strides back to the empty bark.

502.
THE SWAN! THE SWAN!

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Elsa falls prostrate. At that moment Ortrud steps forth, and exultingly confesses her wicked sorcery. *She* has enchained Gottfried under the form of a swan, and she declares that had the knight tarried another minute, the spell would have been broken, and Gottfried restored. But at that instant, whilst a burst of execration rises from the crowd, the swan vanishes—the young Gottfried rushes towards Elsa.

503. *EXIT* LOHENGRIN.

The dove of the Holy Grail flutters down, and is harnessed by Lohengrin to the bark, which moves off apace with the shining knight. With a scream of joy, Elsa falls into her brother's arms, and then catching sight of her beloved borne away on the great flood, with a wild despairing cry of "My husband!" sinks lifeless to the ground.

The consummate dramatic finish of this scene will bear the fullest analysis; it will feed the profoundest meditation. The struggle between the earthly love and the heavenly mission of the holy knight; the serene triumph of the latter, in the midst of that ecstatic contemplation of celestial glory which fills his last long monologue; the entire, unhurried performance of his whole mission, and detailed delivery ere he goes, of the perfect plot perfectly wrought out; the tender memory of the swan; the overpowering spell that is upon him to depart, as the vision of the Grail comes, whose he is and whom he serves;

504. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY.

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the crushed self-abasement of Elsa, her late repentance—too late; her illogical passion, hoping against hope to detain her knight; her exhausted emotions, waking at last only in fitful bursts, and exhibiting in the shock of their complete overthrow the phenomena of wild joy, instantly followed by the last flood of grief, in which her very life seems to exhale itself; the fateful gleam of a malignant spite, which prompts Ortrud a moment too soon to reveal her secret; the crowning vision of the Sangrail, in the shape of the heavenly dove which once a year descended to renew the potency of the sacrificial cup, and now flutters for a second before the dazed eyes of mortals, in that supreme hour of an accomplished deliverance; and lastly, the perfect close, and sense of dramatic unity left upon the mind by the departure of the shining knight, as he came, over the great water-floods, lost as soon as known—eternal symbol of the joy and tender glories that are for ever vanishing in the moment of possession; yet, in their transitory glow, leaving behind them the memory which is to feed the coming years with the bright legacy of an aspiring and insatiable hope: all this must stamp *Lohengrin*—as, indeed, every work of WAGNER'S is stamped—with an impress of earnest reality separating it from all ordinary operas, and constituting it a great poem, wedded to dramatic action and filled with noble music.

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X.

INTERLUDE

ON PHENOMENAL PLAYERS.

THE greatest phenomenal players of their age have undoubtedly been LISZT and PAGANINI. They were great not merely because they could play better than others, but because they created what they played. It is quite possible to maintain that RUBINSTEIN and BÜLOW play quite as well as LISZT, or that ERNST and JOACHIM are as good as PAGANINI, but it is nevertheless an absurdity and impertinence to argue the point. They were not the first—they came afterwards. A man who takes gold out of a mine may be as good as the man who discovered the mine, but he is not that man. He does excellent work, but he was not the first on the ground—he came afterwards.

505. THE *FIRST* MEN.

A thing once discovered cannot be rediscovered, and an

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aureole shines round the head of the pioneer to which no subsequent traveller may lay claim. But quite apart from what is new and original in their respective contributions to Art, it is doubtful whether two such extraordinary personalities as those of PAGANINI and LISZT have ever appeared in the world of virtuosity. In some respects LISZT is even more extraordinary than PAGANINI; for, in the first place, he electrified a world still under the spell of the weird Italian's Cremona; and, in the second place, his demands have achieved for the piano what no demands of PAGANINI ever could for the violin—a profound modification and re-creation of the instrument to enable him to realise his prodigious feats of sonority and execution. The modifications introduced by violin repairers—strengthening bars, ribs, glueing cracks, &c.—are trifling compared to the changes which separate the pianoforte of 1820 from that of 1880. PAGANINI is the creator of the modern violin school; but LISZT has not only created the modern pianoforte school, but in some sort the modern pianoforte.

506. LISZT AND PIANO MANUFACTURE.

Great heart, great brain, daring originality, electric organisation, iron nerve, and a soul vibrating to sound like an Æolian harp to the wind; there you have the personality, phenomenal and unique, of FRANZ LISZT.

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Music - Biog
& Liszt

XI.

LISZT.

WHO has not heard of LISZT? Who has heard LISZT? I suppose to most of us in England he is personally a great tradition and nothing more; his compositions, indeed, form the chief *pièces de résistance* of our annual crop of pianoforte recitals, but the man and his playing are alike unknown. He has already become historical during his life-time. Only by a happy chance can I reckon myself amongst the few who have lately heard LISZT play.

507. WHO HAS HEARD LISZT?

I happened to be staying in Rome, and LISZT kindly invited me over to the Villa d'Este twice.

There at Tivoli, alone with him, he conversed with me of the times long gone by—of MENDELSSOHN, of PAGANINI, of CHOPIN.

There in the warm light of an Italian autumn, subdued by the dark-red curtains that hung in his study, with an old-world silence around us, he sat at his piano once more; and as he played to me the clock of time went back, and CHOPIN entered with his pale refined face, his slight aristocratic figure: HEINE sat restlessly in a dark corner;

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MADAME SAND reclined in the deep window-niche overlooking the desolate Campagna, with Rome in the distance; DE LAMMENAIS stood at the foot of the piano—a delicate, yet sinewy and mobile frame—with his noble eager face all aglow, his eloquent tongue silent, listening to the inspiration of another believer in another *evangelium*—the evangelium of the emotions, the Gospel of Art.

Shadows all of you, yet to me for an hour, in the deep solitude of the great Cardinal's palace alone with LISZT, more real than the men and women of our lesser day.

LISZT is the embodiment of an epoch. In religion, politics, and philosophy he represents that creative ferment through which the genius of the nineteenth century has come to the understanding and possession of itself. The Romanticism of 1830–40, with all its deplorable aberrations, its reactionary and one-sided views, its hazardous experiments, its impatience of authority, its childlike and impulsive fancy, was nevertheless a great creative period.

508. LISZT EMBODIES AN EPOCH.

Then were sown the seeds that have since germinated so gloriously in literature, and art, and politics throughout Europe. Then flourished, or at least were born, the men who impressed this century with its peculiar characteristics—its insatiable thirst for knowledge, boundless curiosity, noble upward endeavour, despairing scepticism, trembling hope, eager love of life and intense belief in itself, intuitive

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convictions which every decade has done something to deepen and perhaps to justify.

It was the age of LISZT, of PAGANINI, THALBERG; of MENDELSSOHN, SCHUMANN, SPOHR, CHOPIN, WAGNER; of LAMARTINE, GEORGE SAND, ALFRED DE MUSSET, VICTOR HUGO; of BYRON, SHELLEY, COLERIDGE, SCOTT, and WORDSWORTH—age of upheaval and revolution, ferment of new life, unsettlement of old opinions. The political heavens were full of portents; the firmament of art flashing with meteors; the social world alive and palpitating with new theories of life, which mistook license for liberty—truly an age convulsed with the violence of the old aboriginal impulses suddenly let loose.

One thousand eight hundred and eleven was the year of the great comet—a year which, we are told, re-echoed with the sounds of the lyre and the sword, and announced so many pioneering spirits of the future.

509. 1811. THE COMET YEAR.

In 1811 was FRANZ LISZT born. He had the hot Hungarian blood of his father, the fervid German spirit of his mother, and he inherited the lofty independence, with none of the class prejudices, of the old Hungarian nobility from which he sprang.

LISZT's father, ADAM, earned a modest livelihood as agent and accountant in the house of COUNT ESTERHAZY. In that great musical family inseparably associated with the names

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of HAYDN and SCHUBERT,* ADAM LISZT had frequent opportunities of meeting distinguished musicians. The Prince's private band had risen to public fame under the instruction of the venerable HAYDN himself. The LISZTS, father and son, often went to Eisenstadt, where the Count lived; there they rubbed elbows with CHERUBINI and HUMMEL, a pupil of MOZART.

FRANZ took to music from his earliest childhood. When about five years old, he was asked what he would like to do. "Learn the piano," said the little fellow. Soon afterwards his father asked him what he would like to be; the child pointed to a print of BEETHOVEN hanging on the wall, and said, "Like him." Long before his feet could reach the pedals or his fingers stretch an octave, the boy spent all his spare time strumming, making what he called "clangs," chords, and modulations. He mastered scales and exercises without difficulty.

510. "LEARN THE PIANO."

But there was a certain intensity in all he did, which seemed to wear him out. He was attacked with fever, but would hardly be persuaded to lie down until completely exhausted; then he lay and prayed aloud to God to make him well, and vowed that on his recovery he would only make hymns and play music

511. CHARACTER.

* See my *Music and Morals*, sections 96, 106, 1st Edition.

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which pleased God and his parents. The strong lines of his character early asserted themselves—religious ardour, open sincerity, a certain nobleness of soul that scorned a lie and generously confessed to a fault, quick affections, ready sympathies, a mind singularly without prejudices or antipathies, except in music. LISZT's musical antipathies are matters of world-wide notoriety; his hatred of "Conservatorium" dogma, his contempt for the musical doctrinaire, his aversion to the shallow and frivolous, his abhorrence of mere sensationalism.

512. THE WHEREWITHAL.

The boy's decided bent soon banished all thought of anything but a musical vocation, but the *res angustæ domi* stood in the way. How was he to be taught? how was he to be heard? how to earn money? That personal fascination, from which no one who has ever come in contact with LISZT has quite escaped, helped him thus early. When eight years old, he played before COUNT ESTERHAZY in the presence of six noblemen, amongst them COUNTS AMADEE, APPONYI, and SZAPARY—eternal honour to their names! They at once subscribed for him an annuity of six hundred gulden for six years. This was to help the little prodigy to a musical education.

His parents felt the whole importance of the crisis. If the boy was to prosper, the father's present retired life with a fixed income must be changed for an unsettled wandering and precarious existence. "When the six years are over,

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and your hopes prove vain, what will become of us?" said his mother, who heard, with tears in her eyes, that father was going to give up the agency and settle down wherever the boy might need instruction, protection, and a home. "Mother," said the impetuous child, "what God wills!" and he added, prophetically enough, "God will help me to repay you for all your anxieties and for what you do for me." And with what results he laboured in this faith, years afterwards in Paris, we shall see.

513. THE WIDE, WIDE WORLD.

The agency was thrown up; the humble family, mother, father, son, went out alone from the little Hungarian village into an unknown and untried world, simply trusting to the genius, the will, the word of an obscure child of eight: "I will be a musician, and nothing else!"

As the child knelt at his farewell mass in the little village church of Raiding, many wept, others shook their heads, but some even then seemed to have a presentiment of his future greatness, and said, "That boy will one day come back in a glass coach." This modest symbol represented to them the idea of boundless wealth.

514. MANY MASTERS.

HUMMEL would only teach for a golden louis a lesson, and then picked his pupils; but at Vienna the father and son fell in with CZERNY, BEETHOVEN'S pupil, and the famous SALIERI, now seventy years old.

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CZERNY at once took to LISZT, but refused to take anything for his instruction. SALIERI was also fascinated, and instructed him in harmony; and fortunate it was that LISZT began his course under two such strict mentors.

He soon began to resent CZERNY's method, thought he knew better and needed not those dry studies of CLEMENTI and that irksome fingering by rule; he could finger everything in half-a-dozen different ways. There was a moment when it seemed that master and pupil would have to part; but timely concessions to genius paved the way to dutiful submission, and years afterwards the great master dedicated to the rigid disciplinarian of his boyhood his *Vingt-quatre Grandes Études* in affectionate remembrance.

Young talent often splits upon the rock of self-sufficiency. Many a clever artist has failed because in the pride of youthful facility he has declined the method and drudgery of a correct technique.

Such a light as LISZT's could not be long hid; all Vienna in 1822 was talking of the wonderful boy. "Est deus in nobis," wrote the papers rather profanely. The "little Hercules," the "young giant," the boy "virtuoso from the clouds," were amongst the epithets coined to celebrate his marvellous rendering of HUMMEL's "Concerto in A" and a free "Fantasia" of his own.

515. FIRST APPEARANCES.

The Vienna Concert Hall was crowded to hear him; and

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the other illustrious artists—then, as indeed they have been ever since forced to do wherever LISZT appeared—effaced themselves with as good a grace as they could.

It is a remarkable tribute to the generous nature as well as to the consummate ability of LISZT, that, whilst opposing partisans have fought bitterly over him—Thalbergites, Herzites, Mendelssohnites *versus* Lisztites—yet few of the great artists who have, one after another, had to yield to him in popularity have denied to him their admiration, while most of them have given him their friendship.

LISZT early wooed and early won Vienna. He spoke ever of his dear Viennese and their "resounding city."

When I saw LISZT at Tivoli in 1880, I remember his saying to me, "J'ai reçu le célèbre baiser de BEETHOVEN."

516. THE KISS OF BEETHOVEN.

I find that BEETHOVEN's secretary, SCHINDLER, wrote, in 1823, to BEETHOVEN: "You will be present at little LISZT's concert, will you not? It will encourage the boy. Promise me that you will go." And BEETHOVEN went. When the "little LISZT" stepped on to the platform, he saw BEETHOVEN in the front row; it nerved instead of staggering him—he played with an *abandon* and inspiration which defied criticism. Amidst the storm of applause which followed, BEETHOVEN was observed to step up on the platform, take the young virtuoso in his arms, and salute him, as LISZT assured me, "on both cheeks." This was an event not to be lightly forgotten,

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and hardly after fifty-seven years to be alluded to without a certain awe; indeed, LISZT's voice quite betrayed his sense of the seriousness of the occasion as he repeated, with a certain conscious pride and gravity, "Oui, j'ai reçu le baiser de BEETHOVEN."

A concert tour on his way to Paris brought him before the critical public of Stuttgardt and Munich. HUMMEL, an old man, and MOSCHELES, then in his prime, heard him, and declared that his playing was equal to theirs. But LISZT was bent upon completing his studies in the celebrated school of the French capital, and at the feet of the old musical dictator CHERUBINI.

517. CHERUBINI AND LISZT.

The ERARDS, who were destined to owe so much to LISZT, and to whom LISZT throughout his career has owed so much, at once provided him with a magnificent piano; but CHERUBINI put in force a certain bye-law of the Conservatoire excluding foreigners, and excluded FRANZ LISZT.

This was a bitter pill to the eager student. He hardly knew how little he required such patronage. In a very short time "*le petit* LISZT" was the great Paris sensation. The old *noblesse* tried to spoil him with flattery, the DUCHESS DE BERRI drugged him with bonbons, the DUKE OF ORLEANS called him the "little MOZART." He gave private concerts at which HERZ, MOSCHELES, LAFONT, and DE BERIOT assisted. ROSSINI

518. PRODIGIOUS!

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would sit by his side at the piano and applaud. He was a "miracle." The company never tired of extolling his "verve, fougue et originalité," whilst the ladies, who petted and caressed him after each performance, were delighted at his simple and graceful carriage, the elegance of his language, and the perfect breeding and propriety of his demeanour.

He was only twelve when he played for the first time at the Italian Opera, and one of those singular incidents which remind one of PAGANINI's triumphs occurred.

At the close of a *bravura cadenza* the band forgot to come in, so absorbed were the musicians in watching the young prodigy. Their failure was worth a dozen successes to LISZT. The ball of the marvellous was fairly set rolling.

GALL, the inventor of phrenology, took a cast of the little LISZT's skull; TALMA, the tragedian, embraced him publicly with effusion; and the misanthropic MARQUIS DE NOAILLES became his mentor, and initiated him into the art of painting.

In 1824 LISZT, then thirteen years old, came with his father to England; his mother returned to Austria.

519. GEORGE IV. AND LISZT.

He went down to Windsor to see GEORGE IV., who was delighted with him, and LISZT, speaking of him to me, said: "I was very young at the time, but I remember the king very well—a fine pompous-looking gentleman."

In London he met CLEMENTI, whose exercises he had so

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objected to, CIPRIANI POTTER, CRAMER, also of exercise celebrity, KALKBRENNER, NEATE, then a fashionable pianist, once a great favourite of GEORGE III., and whom I remember about thirty years ago in extreme old age at Brighton. He described to me the poor old king's delight at hearing him play some simple English melodies. "I assure you, Mr. NEATE," said GEORGE III., "I have had more pleasure in hearing you play those simple airs than in all the variations and tricks your fine players affect."

GEORGE IV. went to Drury Lane on purpose to hear the boy, and commanded an encore. LISZT was also heard in the theatre at Manchester, and in several private houses.

On his return to France people noticed a change in him. He was now fourteen, grave, serious, often pre-occupied, already a little tired of praise, and excessively tired of being called "le petit LISZT." His vision began to take a wider sweep. The relation between art and religion exercised him. His mind was naturally devout. THOMAS À KEMPIS was his constant companion. "Rejoice in nothing but a good deed"; "Through labour to rest, through combat to victory"; "The glory which men give and take is transitory"—these and like phrases were already deeply engraven on the fleshly tablets of his heart. Amidst all his glowing triumphs he was

520. A CHANGE.

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developing a curious disinclination to appear in public; he seemed to yearn for solitude and meditation.

In 1827 he now again hurried to England for a short time, but his father's sudden illness drove them to Boulogne, where, in his forty-seventh year, died ADAM LISZT, leaving the young FRANZ for the first time in his life, at the early age of sixteen, unprotected and alone.

521. DEATH OF HIS FATHER.

Rousing himself from the bodily prostration and torpor of grief into which he had been thrown by the death of his father, FRANZ, with admirable energy and that high sense of honour which has always distinguished him, began to set his house in order. He called in all his debts, sold his magnificent grand Erard, and left Boulogne for Paris with a heavy heart and a light pocket, but not owing a sou.

He sent for his mother, and for the next twelve years, 1828–1840, the two lived together, chiefly in Paris. There, as a child, he had been a nine-day's wonder, but the solidity of his reputation was now destined to go hand in hand with his stormy and interrupted mental and moral development.

522. CARE OF HIS MOTHER.

Such a plant could not come to maturity all at once. No drawing-room or concert-room success satisfied a heart for which the world of human emotion seemed too small,

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and an intellect piercing with intuitive intelligence into the "clear-obscure" depths of religion and philosophy.

But FRANZ was young, and FRANZ was poor, and his mother had to be supported. She was his first care. Systematically, he laboured to put by a sum which would assure her of a competency, and often with his tender genial smile he would remind her of his own childish words, "God will help me to repay you for all that you have done for me." Still he laboured often wofully against the grain.

"Poverty," he writes, "that old mediator between man and evil, tore me from my solitude devoted to meditation, and placed me before a public on whom not only my own but my own mother's existence depended. Young and overstrained, I suffered painfully under the contact with external things which my vocation as a musician brought with it, and which wounded me all the more intensely that my heart at this time was filled entirely with the mystical feelings of love and religion."

Of course the gifted young pianist's connection grew rapidly. He got his twenty francs a lesson at the best houses; he was naturally a welcome guest, and from the first seemed to have the run of high Parisian society. His life was feverish, his activity irregular, his health far from strong; but the vulgar temptations of the gay capital seemed to have little attraction for his noble nature. His heart remained unspoiled.

523. UNSETTLED CONDITIONS.

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He was most generous to those who could not afford to pay for his lessons, most pitiful to the poor, most dutiful and affectionate to his mother. Coming home late from some grand entertainment, he would sit outside on the staircase till morning sooner than awaken, or perhaps alarm, her by letting himself in. But in losing his father he seemed to have lost a certain method and order. His meals were irregular, so were his lessons; more so were the hours devoted to sleep.

524. A FEMALE FORM!

At this time he was hardly twenty; we are not surprised anon to hear in his own words of "a female form chaste and pure as the alabaster of holy vessel"; but he adds: "Such was the sacrifice which I offered with tears to the God of Christians!"

I will explain.

MDLLE. CAROLINE ST. CRICQ was just seventeen, lithe, slender, and of "angelic" beauty, and a complexion like a lily flushed with roses, "impressionable to beauty, to the world, to religion, to God." The Countess, her mother, appears to have been a charming woman, very partial to LISZT, whom she engaged to instruct Mademoiselle in music.

The lessons were not by time, but by inclination. The young man's eloquence, varied knowledge, ardent love of literature, and flashing genius won both the mother and daughter. Not one of them seemed to suspect the whirlpool of grief and death to which they were hurrying. The

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Countess fell ill and died, but not before she had recommended LISZT to the COUNT ST. CRICQ as a possible suitor for the hand of Mademoiselle.

The haughty diplomat ST. CRICQ at once put his foot down. The funeral over, LISZT's movements were watched. They were innocent enough. He was already an *enfant de la maison*, but one night he lingered reading aloud some favourite author to Mademoiselle a little too late. He was reported by the servants, and received his polite dismissal as music master.

In an interview with the Count his own pride was deeply wounded. "Difference of rank!" said the Count. That was quite enough for LISZT. He rose, pale as death, with quivering lip, but uttered not a word.

As a man of honour he had but one course. He and CAROLINE parted for ever. She contracted later an uncongenial marriage; he seems to have turned with intense ardour to religion. His good mother used to complain to those who came to inquire for him that he was all day long in church, and had ceased to occupy himself, as he should, with music.

525. LOVE AND GRIEF.

Love, grief, religion, all struggling together for victory in that young and fervid spirit, at last seemed to fairly exhaust him. His old haunts knew him not; his pupils were neglected; he saw no friends; shut himself up in his room; and at last would only

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see his mother at meals. He never appeared in the streets, and not unnaturally ended by falling dangerously ill.

It was at this time that Paris was one morning startled with the following newspaper announcement:

"DEATH OF YOUNG LISZT.

526.

"DEATH OF YOUNG LISZT." "Young LISZT died at Paris—the event is painful—at an age when most children are at school. He had conquered the public," &c.

So wrote the *Étoile*. In fact, he was seriously ill. M. VON LENZ, BEETHOVEN'S biographer, went to visit him. He was lying pale, haggard, and apathetic; could hardly be roused to converse except occasionally when music cropped up. Then his eye brightened for a moment like the "flashing of a dagger in the sun."

In 1830 the Revolution burst on Paris. This, it seems, was needed to arouse LISZT. The inner life was suddenly to

527.

REVOLUTION AND RESURRECTION. be exchanged for the outer. Self was to be merged in the larger interests, some of them delusions, which now began to pose again under the cunning watchwords of "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité." Generous souls saw in the quarrel of CHARLES X. with his people the hope of a new national life. They proposed to exchange the old and effete "Divine right" for the legitimate "sovereignty of the people." "C'est le canon qui l'a

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guéri!" his mother used to say. LISZT was hardly restrained by her tears and entreaties from rushing to the barricades. The cure threatened to be worse than the disease. The heroic deeds of the "great week" inflamed him, and he shouted with the rest for the silver-haired GENERAL LAFAYETTE, "genius of the liberties of two worlds."

The republican enthusiasm, so happily restrained from action out of affection for his dependent mother, found a more wholesome vent in a vigorous return to his neglected art. Just as he was busy revolving great battle symphonies, his whole artistic nature received a decisive and startling impulse from the sudden apparition of PAGANINI in Paris. Preceded by revolution and cholera, this weird man had come upon the bright city that had sinned and suffered so much, and found her shaken and demoralised, but still seething with a strange ferment of new life in which Saint-Simonianism, communism, and scepticism, side by side with fanaticism, piety, and romance, struggled to make confusion worse confounded. Into the depths of what has been called the Romantic movement of 1830–40 it is not my purpose here to enter. There was war alike with the artificial hum-drum of the old French world and the still more artificial revival of the classical world of Greece and Rome.

528. PAGANINI AND THE AGE.

The human spirit was at length to be liberated; no one,

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it was held, need believe anything that did not happen to commend itself to his fancy or passion. As HEINE put it: "The great God, it appeared, was not at all the being in whom our grandmothers had trusted; he was, in fact, none other than you yourself." No one need be bound by the morals of an effete civilisation. In Love the world of sentiment alone must decide our actions. Everyone must be true to nature. All men were brothers, and women should have equal and independent rights. The social contract, most free and variable, must be substituted for marriage, community of goods for hereditary possessions, philosophy for law, and romance for religion. The beautiful and pregnant seeds of truth that lay imbedded in the teeming soil of this great movement have since fully germinated; its extravagances have already, to a great extent, been outgrown.

In spite of theories disastrous to political and social order, the genius of MADAME SAND, VICTOR HUGO, and A. DE MUSSET, sceptic and sensualist as he was, have rescued the movement from the despair of raw materialism, and produced works of immortal beauty and spiritual significance.

They helped the European spirit to recover its independence, they reacted against the levelling tyranny of the first NAPOLEON, and were largely instrumental in undermining the third NAPOLEON'S throne of gilded lead. Stained with licence and full of waywardness, it was, nevertheless, an age

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of great and strong feelings—an age volcanic, vivid, electric. Such an age eagerly welcomed the magicians who set the language of emotion free, and gave to music its myriad wings and million voices.

PAGANINI appeared. The violin was no more the violin. A new transcendent *technique* made it the absolute minister of an emancipated and fantastic will. The extraordinary power exercised by the Italian violinist throughout Europe was quickened by the electric air which he breathed. The times were ripe. He stood before kings and people as the very emotional embodiment of the *Zeitgeist*. He was the emancipated demon of the epoch, with power to wield the sceptre of sound, and marshal in strange and frenzied legions the troubled spirits of the time.

When LISZT heard PAGANINI, it seemed to him to be the message for which he had been waiting. From him he doubtless received that passion for "transcendant execution," that absolute perfection of *technique*, which enabled him to create the modern pianoforte school, and win for ERARD and BROADWOOD what PAGANINI won for STRADIVARIUS and JOSEPH GUARNERIUS. His transcriptions of PAGANINI'S studies, the *arpeggio*, the *fioriture*, the prodigious *attaque* and *élan* that took audiences by storm, the meetings of extremes which abolished the spaces on the pianoforte key-board by making the hands ubiquitous—these and other "developments" were doubtless inspired by the prodigious feats of PAGANINI.

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LISZT now suddenly retired from the concert-room. He was no longer heard in public; he seemed disinclined, except in the presence of his intimates, to exhibit his wondrous talent; but he retired to perfect himself, to work up and work out the new impulses which he had received from PAGANINI.

529. LISZT WITHDRAWS HIMSELF.

He thus early laid deep the foundations of his unique virtuosity; and when he reappeared in public, he seemed to mount at once to that solitary pinnacle of fame and surpassing excellence to which the greatest pianists then and ever since have looked up in admiring and despairing wonder. TAUSIG said, "We are all blockheads by the side of LISZT." RUBINSTEIN has often declared LISZT's perfection of art and wealth of resource to be simply unrivalled.

For a short time in his absence at Paris, it was thought that THALBERG would prove a formidable opponent. But LISZT had only to reappear, and THALBERG himself was forced to join in the general applause. When between the various schools there was war, it was carried on by the partisans of the great men. Although they freely criticised one another, nothing is more remarkable than the kindly personal feeling which obtained between LISZT and his natural enemies, the great pianists of the age, MOSCHELES, CHOPIN, MENDELSSOHN, THALBERG.

530. LISZT AND THALBERG.

There were no doubt cabals, and at one time in Paris he

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met with much detraction, but he seemed to move in a region of lofty courtesy in which squabbling for precedence was out of place; and his generosity of heart and genial recognition of others' talent disarmed criticism and silenced malice.

531. REACTION.

With the outburst of the Revolution, with the appearance of PAGANINI, came also to LISZT a violent reaction against the current religious ideas and the whole of the Catholic teaching. Reading had opened his eyes; the Catholic system seemed to him not only inadequate, but false. He required a freer atmosphere, one rather more interpretative of human facts and human nature; he thought he found it in the doctrines of the Saint-Simonians. The "Nouveau Christianisme," by far the best of ST. SIMON'S lucubrations, seemed to show that the Church had misrepresented and outraged the religion of CHRIST. It failed to take due account of art and science, had no sympathy with progress, refused altogether to assimilate the *Zeitgeist*, and had evidently ceased to lead the thinkers or purify the masses.

532. LISZT AND DE LAMENNAIS.

About this time LISZT came across the eloquent and gifted ABBÉ DE LAMENNAIS. This man it was who, more than any other, saved LISZT from drifting into the prevailing whirlpool of atheism. The heterodox Abbé, who himself had broken with the

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retrograde religion of Rome, re-formulated his system, and discovered for him what at that time he most craved for—a link between his religion and his art.

"Art," said DE LAMENNAIS, "is in man what creative power is in GOD." Art is the embodiment of eternal types. Nature suggests a beauty she never completely realises. Only *in the soul of man* is the supernal beauty mirrored as it exists *in the mind of God.* Art is the soul's formula for the expression of its inner life. "Art, therefore, is an expression of GOD; her works are an infinite manifold reflection of Him."

533. THE MISSION OF ART.

The mission of art to reveal the secrets of the inner life, to lift the souls of others into high communion with itself, to express its joy in possession, its hope of attainment, its instiable and divine longings, its dreams of the infinite—these seemed to LISZT high functions, enriching, fertilising, and consoling all life, and leading the spirit forth into that weird border-land of the emotions, where voices come to it from the Unseen, and radiant flashes from behind the Veil.

534. LISZT AND CHOPIN.

It was towards the close of 1831 that LISZT met CHOPIN in Paris. From the first, these two men, so different, became fast friends. CHOPIN's delicate, retiring soul found a singular delight in LISZT's strong and imposing personality. LISZT's exquisite per-

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ception enabled him perfectly to live in the strange dream-land of CHOPIN's fancies, whilst his own vigour inspired CHOPIN with nerve to conceive those mighty Polonaises that he could never properly play himself, and which he so gladly committed to the keeping of his prodigious friend. LISZT undertook the task of interpreting CHOPIN to the mixed crowds which he revelled in subduing, but from which his fastidious and delicately-strung friend shrank with something like aversion.

From CHOPIN, LISZT and all the world after him got that *tempo rubato*, that playing with the duration of notes without breaking the time, and those arabesque ornaments which are woven like fine embroidery all about the pages of CHOPIN's nocturnes, and which lift what in others are mere casual flourishes into the dignity of interpretative phrases and poetic commentaries on the text.

People were fond of comparing the two young men who so often appeared in the same salons together—LISZT with his finely-shaped, long, oval head and *profile d'ivoire*, set proudly on his shoulders, his stiff hair of dark blonde thrown back from the forehead without a parting, and cut in a straight line, his *aplomb*, his magnificent and courtly bearing, his ready tongue, his flashing wit and fine irony, his genial *bonhomie* and irresistibly winning smile; and CHOPIN, also with dark blonde hair, but soft as silk, parted on one side, to use LISZT's own words, "an angel of fair countenance with brown eyes, from which intellect

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beamed rather than burned, a gentle, refined smile, slightly aquiline nose, a delicious, clear, almost diaphonous complexion, all bearing witness to the harmony of a soul which required no commentary beyond itself."

535. LISZT ON CHOPIN.

Nothing can be more generous or more true than LISZT's recognition of CHOPIN's independent support. "To our endeavours," he says, "to our struggles, just then so much needing certainty, he lent us the support of a calm, unshakable conviction, equally armed against apathy and cajolery." There was only one picture on the walls of CHOPIN's room; it hung just above his piano. It was a head of LISZT.

The over-intensity of LISZT's powerful nature may have occasionally led him into extravagances of virtuosity, which laid him open to some just criticism. ROBERT SCHUMANN observed acutely: "It appears as if the sight of CHOPIN brought him again to his senses."

536. THE ELEMENTS OF THE MUSIC OF THE FUTURE.

It is no part of my present scheme to describe the battle which romanticism in music waged against the prevalent conventionalities. We know the general outcome of the struggle culminating, after the most prodigious artistic convulsions, in the musical supremacy of RICHARD WAGNER, who certainly marks firmly and broadly enough the greatest stride in musical development made since BEETHOVEN.

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That HECTOR BERLIOZ emancipated the orchestra from all previous trammels, and dealt with sound at first-hand as the elemental and expressional breath of the soul, that he was thus the immediate precursor of WAGNER, who said with more modesty than truth, "I have invented nothing," this is now admitted. That SCHUMANN was afraid of the excesses into which the romantic musicians threatened to plunge, and, having started well and cheered them on, showed some tendency to relapse into old form at the moment when his ingenious and passionate soul sank into final and premature gloom—that has been whispered. That MENDELSSOHN was over-wedded to classical tradition and a certain passion for neatness and precision which prevented him from sounding the heights and depths of the revolutionary epoch in the midst of which he moved, and by which his sunny spirit was so little affected—this I am now able to see. That SPOHR was too doctrinaire and mannered, MEYERBEER a great deal too fond of melo-drama and sensation for its own sake, that ROSSINI and AUBER, exclusively bent on amusing the public, were scarcely enough *hommes sérieux* to influence the deeper development of harmony, or effect any revolution in musical form, most musicians will allow; and that LISZT by his unique virtuosity has made it difficult for the world to accept him in any other capacity, is the constant grievance paraded by his admirers. From all which reflections it may be inferred that many workers have contributed to the wealth, resource, and

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emancipation of modern music from those trammels which sought to confine its spirit or limit its freedom. Through past form, it has at length learned to use instead of being used by form. The modern orchestra has won the unity and spontaneity of an independent living organism. Like the body, it is a complex mechanism, but it is to the mind of the composer as the human body is to the soul. It has grown so perfect an instrument, and deals with so perfectly mastered an art, that a prelude like *Lohengrin* or the opening of *Parsifal* sounds like the actual expression of the inner moods of the spirit rendered outwardly with automatic unconscious fidelity. The rule, the *technique*, are lost, hidden, forgotten, because completely efficacious, and subordinated to the free movements of the composer's spirit.

To this latest triumph of the musical art three men since BEETHOVEN have mainly contributed; their names are certainly HECTOR BERLIOZ, WAGNER, and LISZT.

537. LISZT AND THE BEGGARS.

The darling of the aristocracy, accustomed from his earliest youth to mix freely with the *haute noblesse* of Germany and France, LISZT was a republican at heart. He felt acutely for the miseries of the people, and he was always a great player for the masses. "When I play," he once said, "I always play for the people in the top gallery, so that those who can pay but five groschen for their seats may also

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'get something for their money." He was ever foremost in alleviating the sufferings of the poor, the sick, and the helpless. He seems, indeed, to have been unable to pass a beggar, and the beggars soon find that out; they will even intrude upon his privacy and waylay him in his garden.

Once, when at the height of his popularity in Paris, a friend found him holding a crossing-sweeper's broom at the corner of the street. "The fact is," said LISZT simply, "I had no small change for the boy, so I told him to change me five francs, and he asked me to hold his broom for him till he returned." I forgot to ask LISZT whether the lad ever came back.

I was walking with him one day in the private gardens of the Villa d'Este at Tivoli when some little ruffians, who had clambered over the wall, rushed up to him with a few trumpery weeds, which they termed "bouquets." The benevolent Maestro took the gift good-humouredly, and fumbling in his pocket, produced several small coins, which he gave to the urchins, turning to me apologetically: "They expect it, you know. In fact," he added, with a little shrug, "whenever I appear they *do* expect it." His gifts were not always small. He could command large sums of money at a moment's notice. The proceeds of many a splendid concert went to manufacturing committees, widows, orphans, sick and blind. He founded pensions and provided funds for poor musicians; he set up monu-

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ments to great artists. A pecuniary difficulty arising about BEETHOVEN'S statue at Bonn, LISZT immediately guaranteed the whole sum. In the great commercial crisis of 1834 at Lyons LISZT gave concerts for the artisans out of work; and in Hungary, not long after, when the overflow of the Danube rendered hundreds homeless, LISZT was again to the fore with his brilliant performances for charity.

538. THE DIGNITY OF ARTISTS.

All through his life he was an ardent pamphleteer, and he fought not only for the poor, but in the highest interests of his art, and above all for the dignity of his own class. In this he was supported by such musical royalties as MENDELSSOHN, ROSSINI, PAGANINI, and LABLACHE. We have heard how in past days the musicians were not expected to mix with the company, a rope being laid down on the carpet, showing the boundary line between the sacred and profane in social rank.

On one occasion LABLACHE, entering the music saloon at a certain great house, observed the usual rope laid down in front of him when he came on to sing in a duet. He quietly stooped down and tossed it aside. It was never replaced, and the offensive practice dropped out of London society from that day.

LISZT refused to play at the court of QUEEN ISABELLA in

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Spain because the court etiquette forbade the introduction of musicians to royalty. In his opinion even crowned heads owed a certain deference and homage to the sovereignties of art, and he determined it should be paid.

539. LISZT, CZAR NICHOLAS, AND LOUIS-PHILIPPE.

He met CZAR NICHOLAS I., who had very little notion of the respect due to anyone but himself, with an angry look and a defiant word; he tossed FREDERICK WILLIAM IV.'s diamonds into the side scenes; and broke a lance with LOUIS-PHILIPPE, which cost him a decoration.

He never forgave that thrifty king for abolishing certain musical pensions and otherwise snubbing art. He refused on every occasion to play at the Tuileries. One day the King and his suite paid a "private view" visit to a pianoforte exhibition of ERARD'S. LISZT happened to be in the room, and was trying a piano just as His Majesty entered. The King advanced genially towards him and began a conversation; but LISZT merely bowed with a polished but icy reserve.

"Do you still remember," said the King, "that you played at my house when you were but a boy and I DUKE OF ORLEANS? Much has changed since then."

"Yes, Sire," replied LISZT dryly, "but not for the better."

The King showed his royal appreciation of the repartee by striking the great musician's name off the list of those who were about to receive the cross of the Legion of Honour.

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The idol of Parisian drawing-rooms at a most susceptible age, with his convictions profoundly shaken in Catholicism and Church discipline, surrounded by wits and philosophers who were equally sceptical about marriage and the very foundations of society as then constituted, LISZT's views of life not unnaturally underwent a considerable change.

540. LISZT AND GEORGE SAND.

He had no doubt frankly and sincerely imbibed MME. SAND's early philosophy, and his witty saying, which reminds me of something of the kind in Rasselas, that "whether a man marries or not, he will sooner or later be sure to repent it," belongs to this period. His relations with MME. SAND have been much misrepresented. He was far more attracted by her genius than by her person, and although for long years he entertained for her feelings of admiration and esteem, she never exercised over him the despotic influence which drove poor CHOPIN to despair.

Of the misguided Countess who threw herself upon his protection, and whom he treated with the utmost consideration and forbearance for several years, I shall not have much to say; but it must be remembered that he was considerably her junior, that he did his best to prevent her from taking the rash course which separated her from her family and made her his travelling companion, and that years afterwards her own husband, as well as her brother, when affairs came to be

541. THE COUNTESS D'AGOULT.

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arranged and the whole facts of the case were canvassed in a *conseil de famille* at Paris, confessed of their own accord that throughout LISZT had acted "like a man of honour."

It was during his years of travel with the COUNTESS D'AGOULT in Italy and Germany that LISZT composed the great bulk of his celebrated transcriptions of songs and operatic pieces, as well as the renowned *Etudes d'Exécution Transcendante.*

542. "LISZT OR THE DEVIL."

LISZT's attempt to preserve his *incognito* in Italy conspicuously failed. He entered RICORDI's music-shop at Milan, and, sitting down at a grand piano, began to improvise. "'Tis LISZT or the devil!" he heard RICORDI whisper to a clerk, and in another moment the great Italian *entrepreneur* had welcomed the Hungarian *virtuoso* and placed his villa, his box at the opera, his carriage and horses at his disposal. Of course RICORDI very soon organised a concert, in which the Milanese were invited to judge the "pianist of the future," as he was then styled. The Milanese were better pleased with LISZT than was LISZT with the Milanese. He could not make them take to BEETHOVEN. They even kicked at certain favourite studies of his own, but he won them by his marvellous improvisations on fragments of their darling ROSSINI, and afterwards wrote a smart article in the Paris *Gazette Musicale,* expressing his dissatisfaction with

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the frivolity of Italian musical culture, quoting in scorn a voice from the pit which greeted one of his own "Preludes Études"—it was the word "étude" at which the pit stuck —"Vengo al teatro per divertirmi e non per studiare," a sentiment which I think I have heard repeated in more northern latitudes.

Of course LISZT's free criticism got back to Milan. Milan was furious. LISZT was at Venice. The papers denounced him. Everybody proposed to fight duels with him. He was told that he could not play the piano, and they handed him over to the devil. LISZT wrote pacifying letters in the Milanese papers, but the uproar only increased. What would happen if he ever dared to show himself in Milan again, no one dared to speculate. He was a monstrous ingrate; he had insulted everyone down to the decorators and chorographers of La Scala, and he must be chastised summarily for his insolent presumption.

543. LISZT'S CHALLENGE TO MILAN.

When the disturbance was at its height, LISZT wrote to the Milanese journals to say that he declined a paper war; that he had never intended to insult the Milanese; that he would arrive shortly in Milan and hold himself in readiness to receive all aggrieved persons, and give them every explanation and satisfaction they might require.

On a hot summer's day he drove quietly through Milan in an open carriage, and, taking up his abode at a fashionable

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hotel, awaited the arrival of the belligerents. But as not one of them turned up or made the least sign, LISZT went back to Venice.

When, however, in fulfilment of a promise, he returned in September, he met with a characteristic snub, for his concert was poorly attended, and then only by the upper classes. He had mortally wounded the people. He did not consider MERCADANTE and BELLINI so great as BEETHOVEN, and he said so. This was indeed a crime, and proved clearly that he could not play the piano!

Towards the year 1840 the relations between LISZT and the COUNTESS D'AGOULT had become rather strained. The inevitable dissolution which awaits such alliances was evidently at hand. For a brief period on the shores of the Lake of Como the cup of his happiness had indeed seemed full; but *es war ein Traum*. "When the ideal form of a woman," so he wrote to a friend, "floats before your entranced soul—a woman whose heaven-born charms bear no allurements for the senses, but only wing the soul to devotion—if you see at her side a youth sincere and faithful in heart, weave these forms into a moving story of love, and give it the title *On the Shores of the Lake of Como*."

544. DISILLUSION.

He wrote, we may be sure, as he then felt. He was sometimes mistaken, but he was always perfectly open, upright, and sincere.

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A little daughter was born to him at Bellaggio, on the shores of that enchanted lake. He called her COSIMA in memory of Como. She became afterwards the wife of VON BÜLOW, then the wife and widow of RICHARD WAGNER.

But in 1840 the change came. The Countess and her children went off to Paris, and the roving spirit of the great musician, after being absorbed for some time in composition, found its restless rest in a new series of triumphs. After passing through Florence, Bologna, and Rome, he went to Bonn, then to Vienna, and entered upon the last great phase of his career as a virtuoso, which lasted from 1840 to between 1850–60.

545. ITALY, AUSTRIA, RUSSIA.

In 1842 LISZT visited Weimar, Berlin, and then went to Paris. He was meditating a tour in Russia. Pressing invitations reached him from St. Petersburg and Moscow. The most fabulous accounts of his virtuosity had raised expectation to its highest pitch. He was as legendary even amongst the common people as PAGANINI.

His first concert at St. Petersburg realised the then unheard-of sum of £2,000. The roads were crowded to see him pass, and the corridors and approaches to the Grand Opera blocked to catch a glimpse of him.

The same scenes were repeated at Moscow, where he gave six concerts without exhausting the popular excitement.

On his return to Weimar he accepted the post of Kapell-

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meister to the GRAND DUKE. It provided him with that settled abode, and above all with an orchestra, which he now felt so indispensable to meet his growing passion for orchestral composition. But the time of rest had not yet come.

546. BEETHOVEN'S STATUE.

In 1844 and 1845 he was received in Spain and Portugal with incredible enthusiasm, after which he returned to Bonn to assist at the inauguration of BEETHOVEN'S statue. With boundless liberality he had subscribed more money than all the princes and people of Germany put together to make the statue worthy of the occasion and the occasion worthy of the statue.

The golden river which poured into him from all the capitals of Europe now freely found a new vent in boundless generosity. Hospitals, poor and needy, patriotic celebrations, the dignity and interests of art, were all subsidised from his private purse.

547. LISZT'S PRINCELY MUNIFICENCE.

His transcendent virtuosity was only equalled by his splendid munificence; but he found what others have so often experienced—that great personal gifts and prodigious *éclat* cannot possibly escape the poison of envy and detraction. He was attacked by calumny; his very gifts denied and ridiculed; his munificence ascribed to vainglory, and his charity to pride and ostentation; yet none will ever know the extent of his private charities, and no one who knows anything of LISZT can be ignorant of the simple, unaffected

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goodness of heart which prompts them. Still he was wounded by ingratitude and abuse. It seemed to check and paralyse for the moment his generous nature.

Fétis saw him at Coblenz soon after the Bonn festival, at which he had expended such vast sums. He was sitting alone, dejected and out of health. He said he was sick of everything, tired of life, and nearly ruined. But that mood never lasted long with Liszt; he soon arose and shook himself like a lion. His detractors slunk away into their holes, and he walked forth victorious to refill his empty purse and reap new laurels. His career was interrupted by the stormy events of 1848. He settled down for a time at Weimar, and it was then that he began to take that warm interest in Richard Wagner which ended in the closest and most enduring of friendships.

548. DEJECTION AND REVIVAL.

He laboured incessantly to get a hearing for the *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser*. He forced Wagner's compositions on the band, on the Grand Duke; he breasted public opposition and fought nobly for the eccentric and obscure person who was chiefly known as a political outlaw and an inventor of extravagant compositions which it was impossible to play or sing, and odiously unpleasant to listen to.

549. WAGNER.

But years of faithful service, mainly the service and

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immense *prestige* and authority of LISZT, procured WAGNER a hearing, and paved the way for his glorious triumphs at Bayreuth in 1876, 1882, and 1883.

550. LISZT AT SEVENTY-TWO.

At the age of seventy-two LISZT retained the wit and vivacity of forty. He passed from Weimar to Rome, to Pesth, to Berlin, to Vienna, but objected to cross the sea, and told me that he would never again visit England. Latterly he seldom touched the piano, but loved to be surrounded by young aspirants to fame. To them he was prodigal of hints, and ever ready to lavish all sorts of kindness upon people who were *sympathique* to him.

At unexpected moments, in the presence of some timid young girl overpowered with the honour of an introduction, or alone with a friend when old days were spoken of, would LISZT sit down for a few minutes and recall a phrase of CHOPIN or a quaint passage from SCARLATTI, and then, forgetting himself, wander on until a flash of the old fire came back to his eyes as he struck a few grand octaves, and then, just as you were lost in contemplation of that noble head with its grand profile and its cascade of white hair, and those hands that still seemed to be the absolutely unconscious and effortless ministers of his fitful and despotic will, the master would turn away—break off, like one suddenly *blasé*, in the middle of a bar, with "Come, let us take a little walk; it will be cool under the trees"; and he would

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have been a bold man who ventured in that moment to allude to the piano or music.

I saw LISZT but six times, and then only between the years 1876 and 1881. I have heard him play upon two occasions only, then he played certain pieces of CHOPIN at my request and a new composition by himself. I have heard MME. SCHUMANN, BÜLOW, RUBINSTEIN, MENTER, and ESSIPOFF, but I can understand that saying of TAUSIG, himself one of the greatest masters of *technique* whom Germany has ever produced: "No mortal can measure himself with LISZT. He dwells alone upon a solitary height."

. . . . .

(*A Leaf from my Diary.*)

551. I ENTER THE VILLA D'ESTE.

As I drove (in the autumn of 1880) through the groves of olives brightening with crude berries that clothe the slopes of Tivoli, and entered the gateway which leads up to the ducal Villa d'Este, it was with something of the feeling of a pilgrim who approaches a shrine. Two massive doors open on to a monastic cloister, and the entrance to the villa itself is out of the cloisters, just as the rooms are entered from the cloister of Trinity College, Cambridge.

Here for six years past in the autumn LISZT has led a retired life, varied by occasional excursions to Rome.

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I was conducted up a staircase which opened on to a lofty terrace, and thence into a side room, whilst the Swiss valet disappeared to summon the Abbate LISZT. In another moment I saw a side door open, and the venerable figure of LISZT, already for years engraven on my heart, advanced towards me.

It was the same noble and commanding form—with the large finely-chiselled features, the restless glittering eye still full of untamed fire, the heavy white hair, thick mantling on the brow and cropped square only where it reached the shoulders, down which I can well imagine it might have continued to flow unchecked like a snowy cataract.

He came forward with that winning smile of *bonhomie* which at once invites cordiality, and drew me to him with both hands, conducting me at once into a little inner sitting-room with a window opening on to the distant Campagna.

552. KIND ENQUIRIES.

The room was dark, and completely furnished with deep red damask—cool and shadowy contrast to the burning sunshine of Italy. After alluding to our last meeting in WAGNER'S house at Bayreuth, which recalled also the name of WALTER BACHE, who has worked so bravely for LISZT'S music in England, he said, "Now tell me, how is BACHE? I have a particular, quite particular, regard for BACHE; he stayed with me here some years ago, and he has been very steadfast in

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presenting my works in England; and tell me, how is VICTOR HUGO? and have you seen RENAN lately?" I was overwhelmed by these inquiries and the like. I could not give him very good accounts of M. HUGO, whose health I feared was declining; but I said that the last evening I had spent with him in Paris, he had received up to twelve at night, and seemed full of life; although his hours were, as a rule, much earlier now. Of M. RENAN I could, of course, speak much more fully, as he had recently been a good deal with me in England. "RENAN took me to M. HUGO's when I was in Paris, and we had a delightful evening," he remarked. After asking after a few other personal friends, he said, "I am glad to see you here. At this time I have a little more leisure. I escape to this retreat for rest. At Rome I am besieged (*obsédé*) by all sorts of people, with whom I do not care to entertain particular relations—why should I? what have we in common?—they come out of curiosity to stare, that is all; and even here I am worried with callers, who have no interest for me"; and indeed it was current in Rome that the Abbate LISZT would receive no one at Tivoli; and especially ladies were not admitted. I was, therefore, much gratified when he said to me, "You are married—why did not you bring your wife? Come again with her." And so I did; and on my next visit LISZT offered us each an arm. He was much taller than either of us, and, looking down with a paternal air, said, "Come, my children, I will show

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you over the garden." But on my first visit to the Villa d'Este I was alone.

553. A GLORIOUS VIEW.

I could not help admiring the situation of the Villa. "Indeed," said LISZT, "this is quite a princely residence; it is rented by the CARDINAL HOHENLÖHE, with whom I have had very old and friendly relations; he is good enough to apportion it to me in the autumn; you see his picture hangs there. The place is quite a ruin. It belongs to the DUKE OF MODENA, but of course they can't keep it up now: the Cardinal spent £2,000 to make it habitable. You shall see presently, the terraces are rather rough; I don't often go about the place, but I will come out with you now, and show you some points of view. I lunch about one o'clock; you will stay, and put up with the *hospitalité de garçon.*"

He then led me to the window. Down the slope of a precipitous mountain stretched the Villa d'Este gardens; tall cypress-trees marked the lines of walk and terrace; groves of olive, between which peeped glittering cascades and lower parterres, studded here and there with a gleaming statue, and tall jets of water, eternally spouting, fed from the Marcian springs; the extremity of the park seemed to fade away, at an immense depth, into the billowy Campagna.

It was like an enchanted scene; from the contemplation of which I was roused by the Abbate taking my arm, and,

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passing through several ante-chambers, we emerged on to the raised terrace, which commanded one of the most striking views in Italy, or the world.

"Round to the left," said LISZT, "lies Hadrian's Villa; and perhaps your eyes are good enough to see St. Peter's yonder in the horizon." The grey mist hung at a distance of eighteen miles over the straggling buildings of distant Rome; but they gleamed out here and there. Beyond these wooded flanks of the mountain; beyond the ruins of villas where MÆCENAS and HORACE and the ANTONINES held their revels; beyond the rushing murmur of cascades and fountains; never silent, yet ever making a low and slumbrous melody, lay the Campagna like a vast lake, over which the shadow of cloud and flicker of sunlight swept and faded out: and again, beyond the Campagna, loomed the Eternal City with its mighty dome.

We seemed lifted into the upper air, as on the spacious summit of a lofty precipice; the dry vine-leaves hung about the trellised parapets, and the Virginian creeper was just beginning to redden.

554. INTO THE GARDEN.

LISZT was silent. As I looked at the noble and expressive features, never quite in repose, and strongly marked with the traces of those immense emotions which have been embodied by him in his great orchestral preludes, and thundered by him through every capital in Europe, in the marvellous per-

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formances of his earlier days, I could not help saying, "If you do not find rest here, you will rest nowhere on earth"; it was indeed a realm of unapproachable serenity and peace. Then we descended by winding ways, pausing in the long walk, thickly shaded with olive-trees and the beloved ilex, where fifty lions' heads spout fifty streams into an ancient moss-grown tank.

"It is," said LISZT, "a retreat for summer; you can walk all day about these grounds, and never fear the sun—all is shade. But come down lower"; and so we went, at times turning round to look down an avenue, or to catch, through the trees, a peep of the glowing horizon behind.

Presently we came to a central space, led into by four tall cypress-groves. Here, up from a round sheet of water in front of us, leapt four jets to an immense height; and here we rested, whilst the Abbate gave me some account of this Villa or Château d'Este, and its former owners, which differed not greatly from what may be found in most guide-books.

555. A CHAT ON BELLS.

As we re-ascended, the bell of Sta. Croce, in the tall campanile over the cloisters which form part of the Villa d'Este, rang out a quarter to one. It was a bad bell, like most Italian bells, and I naturally alluded to the superiority of Belgium bells, above all others. Rather to my surprise, LISZT said, "Yes, but how are they played? I remember being much struck by

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the Antwerp carillon." I described to him the mechanism of the carillon claveçin and tambour, and reminded him that the Antwerp carillon was much out of tune, Bruges being superior, as well as of heavier calibre, and Mechlin bearing off the palm for general excellence. We stopped short on one of the terraces, and he seemed much interested with a description I gave him of a performance by the great carilloneur M. DENYN at Mechlin, and which reminded me of RUBINSTEIN at his best. He expressed surprise when I alluded to VAN DEN GHEYN'S compositions for bells, laid out like regular fugues and organ voluntaries, and equal in their way to BACH or HANDEL, who were contemporaries of the great Belgian organist and carilloneur. "But," he said, "the Dutch have also good bells. I was once staying with the King in Holland, and I believe it was at Utrecht that I heard some bell-music which was quite wonderful." I have listened myself to that Utrecht carillon, which is certainly superior, and is usually well-handled.

556. LISZT PLAYS TO ME.

We had again reached the upper terrace, where the Abbate's midday repast was being laid out by his valet. It was a charming situation for lunch, commanding that wide and magnificent prospect to which I have alluded; but autumn was far advanced, there was a fresh breeze, and the table was ordered indoors. Meanwhile, LISZT laying his hand upon my arm, we passed

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through the library, opening into his bed-room, and thence to a little sitting-room (the same which commanded that view of the Campagna). Here stood his grand Erard piano. "As we were talking of bells," he said, "I should like to show you an 'Angelus' which I have just written"; and, opening the piano, he sat down. This was the moment which I had so often and so vainly longed for.

When I left England, it seemed to me as impossible that I should ever hear LISZT play, as that I should ever see MENDELSSOHN, who has been in his grave for thirty-three years. How few of the present generation have had this privilege! At Bayreuth, I had hoped, but no opportunity offered itself, and it is well known that LISZT can hardly ever be prevailed upon to open the piano in the presence of strangers. A favourite pupil, POLIG, who was then with him at the Villa d'Este, told me he rarely touched the piano, and that he himself had seldom heard him—"but," he added with enthusiasm, "when the master touches the keys, it is always with the same incomparable effect, unlike anyone else, always perfect."

"You know," said LISZT, turning to me, "they ring the 'Angelus' in Italy carelessly; the bells swing irregularly, and leave off, and the cadences are often broken up thus": and he began a little swaying passage in the treble—like bells tossing high up in the evening air: it ceased, but so softly that the half-bar of silence made itself felt, and the

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listening ear still carried the broken rhythm through the pause. The Abbate himself seemed to fall into a dream; his fingers fell again lightly on the keys, and the bells went on, leaving off in the middle of a phrase. Then rose from the bass the song of the Angelus, or rather, it seemed like the vague emotion of one who, as he passes, hears in the ruins of some wayside cloister the ghosts of old monks humming their drowsy melodies, as the sun goes down rapidly, and the purple shadows of Italy steal over the land, out of the orange west!

We sat motionless—the disciple on one side, I on the other. LISZT was almost as motionless: his fingers seemed quite independent, chance ministers of his soul. The dream was broken by a pause; then came back the little swaying passage of bells, tossing high up in the evening air, the half-bar of silence, the broken rhythm—and the Angelus was rung.

557.
ABBATE AND IL REVERENDO.

Luncheon being announced, we rose, and LISZT, turning to his young friend POLIG, who occupied an apartment at Este, and enjoys the great master's help in his musical studies: "Go, dear friend," he said, "and join us in about an hour—nay, sooner if you will."

So we sat down in the cozily-furnished little sitting-room —dark, like all the Abbate's suite of apartments, and evidently intended to shut out the sun.

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I was still heated with our clambering walk, and LISZT insisted on my keeping on my great-coat, and provided me in addition with a priest's silken skull-cap, playfully remarking, "As you call me 'Abbate,' I shall address you as 'Il Reverendo,' and whenever you come here, you will find this priest's cap ready for you."

The "*hospitalité de garcon*" proved anything but ascetic. A vegetable soup, maccaroni with tomato sauce, a faultless beefsteak or "bistecco" dressed with fried mushrooms, cooked dry; a peculiar salad, composed of a variety of herbs in addition to leeks, onions, lettuce, and fruit, the like of which I can never hope to taste until I lunch again with the Abbate at the Villa d'Este.

We were alone. I need not say that, in such company, the wines seemed to me to possess an ideal fragrance and a Sicilian flavour wholly unlike and incomparably superior to the heavy vintages of Spain. There were some questions about MENDELSSOHN and CHOPIN that I had always wished to ask; but at first the conversation was much more general. We spoke of the curious recent fancy of the Italians for WAGNER's music; the way his operas had been produced at Bologna, and just then *Rienzi* at Rome. "Yes," he said; "the Italians are beginning to understand more kinds of melody than one; they perceive at last that WAGNER's melody pervades each part of his score—it is "*la mélodie à plusieurs*

558. ANECDOTES.

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étages." This notion of "a melody in flats," or "of several stories," struck me as most apt, as well as humorous. Speaking of WAGNER, I related to him an unhappy occasion on which I had been requested by LORD H—— to try and prevail on WAGNER, when in England, to accompany me to his house one night, where we were to meet a royal princess most anxious to see WAGNER. I reluctantly undertook the mission, but failed to induce the great Maestro to go with me, and so was placed in the unpleasant position of having to apologize on my arrival for his absence. "Ah!" said LISZT, laughing, "a similar thing occurred to me lately: some royalties at Sienna asked me to get WAGNER to meet them; but I knew WAGNER better, and at once declined to charge myself with that commission. Your mention of LORD H—— reminds me that I knew him years ago; indeed, in my young days, I was on one occasion at his house, and, curiously enough, a regrettable event occurred to me also. Some ladies present importuned me to play. I was not unwilling, but I did not quite care for the manner in which I was pressed, and I declined; indeed, I believe I left the house rather abruptly. Well, it was a time when I was playing a good deal in the various capitals of Europe, and much more fuss was being made with me than was perhaps necessary; and then, you know, I was much younger, and I dare say acted hastily; but I have always regretted it."

He spoke very little of his extraordinary successes when

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at his zenith, which can only be compared to the sensation produced by PAGANINI. But he spoke, as I have elsewhere stated, with pride of having received the kiss of BEETHOVEN. "Ay," he said, "when I was a very young man, and in public too, it was difficult to get the great man to go and hear rising talent; but my father got SCHINDLER to induce BEETHOVEN to come and hear me—and he embraced me before the whole company." A similar event occurred to JOACHIM, who, when a boy, received the public embrace of MENDELLSOHN after playing a fugue of BACH's.

559. LISZT ON RICHTER, MEYERBEER, WAGNER, AND MENDELSSOHN.

LISZT spoke in the highest terms of HERR RICHTER, at the same time regretting that the Wagner Festivals at the Albert Hall had not been financially more successful. Having been accused, in America and elsewhere, of misrepresenting the relations between WAGNER and MEYERBEER, and knowing that WAGNER would never mention MEYERBEER'S name, nor allow anyone to speak of him in his presence, I asked LISZT whether it was true that MEYERBEER had introduced WAGNER to M. JOLY in Paris, with a view to bringing out his *Flying Dutchman*, knowing all the time that M. JOLY was on the point of bankruptcy. "Well," said LISZT, "that is probably true. No one is exactly to blame, if a young unknown man fails to arrive at once at the Grand Opera de Paris; getting up a work there is a question of many months and thousands of pounds. WAG-

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NER's libretto was bought for a small sum, his music discarded, and he was practically turned adrift. Afterwards, he was notoriously forced to live by arranging Italian opera tunes for the piano and *cornet-à-piston*. It is possible that MEYERBEER may have been of some small use to WAGNER at first, but WAGNER will not hear of him. MENDELSSOHN had the same antipathy." Now I saw another opportunity: "I have often wondered, in reading MENDELSSOHN's letters," I said, "why his allusions to you are so brief and so few; here and there, we read that you were of the company, that the evening was delightful, and that you or CHOPIN played; and MENDELSSOHN seems to have little more to say, though in his allusions to many of his great contemporaries he is often explicit and detailed enough."

"Ah! well," said LISZT, "MENDELSSOHN's letters have been, to some extent, what is called arranged and selected for publication. There is a good deal which it was not advisable to print, or that couldn't be printed; and then there was something between me and MENDELSSOHN: I am sure I don't quite know what; but at one time, a certain coolness sprang up between us; it was, however, much more between our followers than between us. MENDELSSOHN did not get on with the French: at Paris, for instance, and with reason there; then, at Berlin and Leipsic too he had his difficulties with the musical authorities, some of whom were certainly my friends. The first time I saw MENDELSSOHN was at Berlin; I called in

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the morning, about twelve o'clock; he was charming, full of life and vigour, and received me joyously. MADAME MENDELSSOHN pressed me to stay to lunch, and, meaning to go, I still stayed on talking and playing, till suddenly it was six o'clock, and then he said, 'Now you must stay and dine.' So I stayed, and left about nine o'clock, after a delightful day; then the next time we met we had some words about MEYERBEER, whom MENDELSSOHN could not endure, and I spoke rather hotly. I dare say I was in the wrong, but somehow, from that time, we ceased to be quite so cordial, and we did not meet very often; but there was no rupture or quarrel between us, none ever; our partisans quarrelled; but between us personally there was never any real animosity. And then quite late in his career, a year before he died, MENDELSSOHN did a very graceful little thing. He brought me a MS. of BEETHOVEN, a chorus copied in BEETHOVEN'S hand out of MOZART'S *Don Juan*; he knew it was the kind of thing I should value very highly, and he bade me keep it for his sake. Well, I was travelling a good deal—I gave it with other things into my mother's keeping, and I suppose it was shown about, and someone stole it; at any rate, it disappeared; but I always like to remember it, because it proved that, notwithstanding the serious differences which had arisen between our schools and methods before his death, personally he felt kindly towards me down to the last."

The conversation turning on HEINE—"Of course I knew

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HEINE. He was one of those original eccentrics whom it is difficult to class: his reputation was a *célébrité d'auberge*. Yes, he alluded to me in some of his prose works not unkindly. I had the misfortune (*maladresse*) to set one of his songs to music."

"How few good poems there are suitable for music!"

"Yes, and how little good music!"

Of PAGANINI he said, "No one who has not heard him can form the least idea of his playing. The fourth string performances, the tunes in harmonics, and the arpeggios used as he used them, were then all new to the public and the players too; they sat staring at him open-mouthed. Everyone can play his music now, but the same impression can never again be made."

560. PAGANINI AND BOTTESINI, ETC.

Of BOTTESINI, the double-bass soloist, he said, "He is the only great player of my time whom I have never heard. He never seemed to be in my direction, and was always moving about, but is settled now."

LISZT was very humorous upon vamped-up reputations, and the airs and graces which musicians give themselves.

"After a bit, in England at least, you must be 'dignified' —that is a good word; the English like a 'dignified professor!'" and he drew himself up like a very Pecksniff, put on a look of solemn and dictatorial gravity, lifting

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both hands sideways as it were to keep off all common intruders.

561. BÜLOW, RUBINSTEIN, AND MEDIOCRITIES.

Speaking of BÜLOW and of RUBINSTEIN, he said, "They are two men who stand quite apart from all the rest; still, the general level of pianoforte-playing has immensely risen within the last twenty years. There is, however, a good deal of 'humbug' about some professional reputations"; and pretending to hold very carefully a watering-pot, he added, "Some reputations take a good deal of judicious watering. I could mention some who had the good fortune to marry people who watered them beautifully in the newspapers. It makes some difference, you know. I don't say that you can create a reputation without talent; but the 'humbug' is too often at top, and the 'talent' at the bottom; and in England you are miserably taken in by foreigners. It is your own fault; but the way mediocre foreign talent has been over and over again pushed in England—especially bad singers—is simply scandalous."

562. LISZT SPEAKS OF CHOPIN.

How interesting it would be to read the memoirs and criticisms of LISZT upon music and musicians for the last fifty years! No one living, perhaps, with the exception of PROFESSOR ELLA, has such a rich store of musical experience and incident to fall back upon.

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"I have often wished," I said, "that you had written more of your recollections of those great musicians, artists, and poets with whom you have been connected." I alluded to his charming Life of Chopin.

"Ah!" he said abruptly, "CHOPIN had no life, properly speaking; his was an exclusive, self-centred personality. He lived inwardly—he was silent and reserved, never said much, and people were often deceived about him, and he never undeceived them. People talk of the *style* of CHOPIN, the *touch* of CHOPIN, and of playing like CHOPIN. When he played himself, he played admirably well, and especially his own compositions; but he was supposed to have formed a school of Chopinites, who had the Tradition—and you heard that Mr. *This*, and Madame *That*—they alone could play like CHOPIN—he had formed them—people danced round them, and they affected to have the true Chopin secret. Yes," he said, "it was absurd enough; and CHOPIN looked on, and said nothing; he was very diplomatic—he never troubled himself to stop this cant, and to this day there may be those who play 'like CHOPIN'—who have received the sacred 'Tradition.' C'était comme cela du commencement, ce n'était pas *l'école*, c'était plutôt '*l'église* de CHOPIN!'" The last words were pronounced in a solemn tone, and with a look of mock gravity indescribably humorous. As he rose from table, LISZT said, "You spoke of my sketch of CHOPIN—I have just brought out a new edition of it at Leipsic." We went into the library, and he gave me

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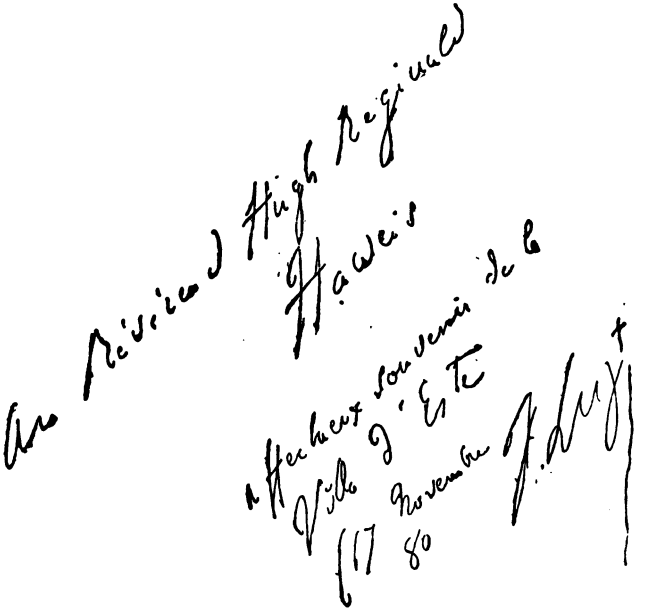
a handsome quarto volume of 312 pages, printed in French on fine paper. "Take it," he said; "you will find some forty pages more than in the edition you have read." I opened the volume, and on the frontispiece found that LISZT had written aslant—



I had conceived, ever since I had studied the life and
563. works of CHOPIN, the greatest desire to hear him
LISZT PLAYS CHOPIN TO ME. played by LISZT: indeed, the numbers of those still living who have had this privilege must be very limited. I ventured to say, "CHOPIN always maintained

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that you were the most perfect exponent of his works. I cannot say how grateful I should be to hear, were it only a fugitive passage of CHOPIN'S, touched by your hand."

"With all the pleasure in the world," replied the immortal pianist; and again I sat down by the grand piano, and humming to him a phrase of op. 37, I begged that it might be that.

"I will play that, and another after it." (The second was op. 48.)

It is useless for me to attempt a description of a performance every phrase of which will be implanted in my memory, and on my heart, as long as I live.

Again, in that room, with its long bright window opening out into the summer-land, we sat in deep shadow—in perfect seclusion; not a sound but the magic notes falling at first like a soft shower of pearls or liquid drops from a fountain —blown spray falling hither and thither, and changing into rainbow tints in its passage, as the harmonic progression kept changing and tossing the fugitive fragments of melody with which that exquisite nocturne opens, until it settles into the calm, happy dream, which seems to rock the listener to sleep with the deep and perfect benison of ineffable rest; then out of the dream, through a few bars, like the uneasy consciousness of a slowly awakening sleeper, and again the interlude, the blown rain of double pearls—until once more the heavenly dream is resumed. I drew my chair gently nearer, I almost held my breath, not to miss a note. There

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was a strange concentrated anticipation about Liszt's playing unlike anything I had ever heard—not for a moment could the ear cease listening; each note seemed prophetic of the next, each yielded in importance to the next: one felt that in the soul of the player the whole nocturne existed from the beginning—as one and indivisible, like a poem in the heart of a poet. The playing of the bars had to be gone through seriatim; but there were glimpses of a higher state of intuition, in which one could read thoughts without words, and possess the soul of music, without the intervention of bars and keys and strings; all the mere elements seemed to fade, nothing but perception remained. Sense of time vanished; all was as it were realised in a moment, that moment the Present—the eternal Present—no Past, no Future. Yet I could not help noticing each incident: the perfect, effortless independence of the fingers, mere obedient ministers of the master's thought; the complete trance of the player—living in the ideal world, and reducing the world of matter about him to the flimsiest of unreal shadows; and I had time to notice the unconscious habits of the master, which have already passed into historic mannerisms in his disciples, like Cardinal Newman's stooping gait, Garibaldi's half closing of the eyes, or Victor Emmanuel's toss of the head. So I noticed the first finger and thumb drawn together to emphasize a note, or the fingers doubled up, then lifted in a peculiar manner, with a gentle sweep in the middle of a phrase—things in

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which those are determined to be like the master who can be like him in nothing else; also the peculiar repercussion resonance, since reduced to something like a science by RUBINSTEIN, and the caressing touch, which seemed to draw the soul of the piano out of it almost before the finger reached the key-board. When LISZT passed silently to op. 48, he arrived at some stiff bravura passages, which called forth his old vigour. Yet here all was perfect; not a note slurred over or missed; the old thunder woke beneath his outstretched hands; the spirits of the vasty deep were as obedient as ever to their master's call. With the last chord he rose abruptly; abruptly we came out of the dim, enchanted land of dreams; the common light of day was once more around me. "Now, you must be off!" he exclaimed; indeed, I had barely time to catch my tram for Rome; "but," he added, "I have something I wish you to take to BACHE and DANNREUTHER"; and he took out three bronze medals, giving me the third to keep; the design was by a Roman artist of great merit. On one side was LISZT's own profile, on the other a star-crowned Fame holding a palm-branch.

564. "I AM TOO OLD."

Before I left, I asked LISZT if I might give some account in print of the delightful day I had spent in his company, so that the hearts of his many friends and admirers in England might be gladdened by some account of him.

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"Whatever you will," he good-naturedly replied; "write what you like, and let me see it when it appears."

Liszt changes his residence three times every year: from Rome to Weimar, from Weimar to Pesth, and at Pesth he is usually occupied in bringing out or conducting some of his works. But he is determined to cross the water no more. He hates the sea; indeed, I am told that he objects even to going over the suspension-bridge at Florence. I ventured to say to him, "In England we have heard of Liszt, but already he is a kind of mythus. 'His legend,' as M. Renan would say, 'has begun to form.' People are beginning to ask, 'Was there indeed ever such a person?' Come over and prove to us that he still exists." But he only shook his head. "I am too old; I cannot come to England."

. . . . .

Liszt was at Rome again in 1881. He happened to be driving in an open carriage just in front of mine, when all Rome went on a pilgrimage to St. Lorenzo Cemetery on All Souls day. We saluted as we passed. I thought him looking more worn than in the previous year, but the old radiant smile and frank courtesy were the same; the fact is, he had fallen on a staircase at Weimar in summer, and was obliged to be very careful. He is not going to the Villa D'Este this year at Tivoli. It is too cold, although the Cardinal Hohenlöhe promised to warm it well with stoves. Last year

565. ALL SOULS DAY.

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about this time, when I was there with him, on a second visit with my wife, the hot November sun beat so fiercely down on our luncheon-table, spread on a broad balcony overlooking the whole Campagna, that we had to move into the shade, and the Swiss valet walked round and round, taking innumerable flies out of our wine. But the morning and evening were colder there than they are at Rome, and November is usually cold enough in Rome.

"I am going," said GREENOUGH the sculptor, to me, 'to look in on the Abbate LISZT to-night, at the Hotel Alberti."

"I will be of the party," I said.

566. LISZT AT ROME.

We were ushered into a little room at about nine o'clock. The Abbate was seated at a game of cards with his grand-daughter the BARONNE DE BÜLOW and an Italian gentleman. He received us with his old delightful grace and *bonhomie*. I insisted upon his finishing his game of cards.

"Where are you staying, and how long have you been here?"

"Why, I left my card and address some days ago."

"Ah, leave me another, and write the address again."

"I will leave you six, and call every day, just to ask after you," said I, laughing.

"Then I will give you six invitations."

"But," I said, "you never asked me to your birthday festival."

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"You are of those who are always asked."

"If I had been at Rome, I should certainly have slipped in."

"I shall receive again; you shall yet come," said LISZT; and then he sat down to finish his game as we others talked to each other, the Abbate turning round to drop a word here and there, just enough to show that he was not indifferent to our presence. They told me he had to be kept very quiet, chiefly because he insisted upon getting through so much work, and I felt that callers should be discreet and not stay too long.

Presently the game was over, and LISZT, pushing aside the cards, turned to us, and I had a few words with him.

567. LISZT ON RUBINSTEIN, MENTER, WIRTZ.

The grand piano was open behind him, but we were not to hear it. I told him of the piano-recital mania in London last season: He said of RUBINSTEIN, "He is the King of all pianists now before the public, he must carry all before him"; and of SOPHIE MENTER, whom he had specially charged me to hear, "No woman can touch her—in every style she is superb." He said he was at work upon orchestral composition, which, he intimated, the public did not always care about; and I spoke of our painter WATTS, who now delights to paint for himself, and often declares that his favourite conceptions are those least understood by the public. "Ah!" said LISZT; "but here is an artist," turning to a

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stranger present, "who paints for the public and *is* appreciated"; it was his graceful way of turning the talk off himself; and then he went on to speak of that eccentric Belgian artist, WIRTZ, whom he had known. The WIRTZ gallery at Brussels is very famous now, though LISZT seemed to fancy WIRTZ was still little known. "His creations," he said, "were strange and fantastic, he was voted mad, and the critics abused and laughed at him. I remember he had a great studio, and at one end a kind of pulpit; he used to get up in it and preach against the critics and society, and declaim about all sorts of things." LISZT told a good anecdote about him. "He used to send these odd pictures to the Salon year after year, which were always returned; the judges would have nothing to say to him. Well, he happened to become possessed of a veritable RUBENS, and the malicious idea occurred to him to put his own name to it, and send it up to the Salon. The judges, taking it for more WIRTZ rubbish, sent it back. Poor WIRTZ, you can imagine that he went up into his pulpit next time with a good text!"

I said to him later, "So you will not come to England?"

"I have travelled so much; I have gone about the world till I am tired. I change residences, as it is, three times a year: Pesth, Weimar, Rome; and if I went about more, I could not get through the work which I have set myself to do. The first time I was in England, I was taken there by

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COUNT ESTERHAZY; you know, he was a great friend of GEORGE IV. That was in 1824."

"You were at Antwerp last year; we all thought you might have come across."

"I was present," he replied; "I shall never go across again."

568. LISZT AND THE AMERICAN LADY.

An American lady here said to LISZT the other day, without much discretion or tact, "Ah, Abbate, if you would only come to America, you could make a large fortune!" forgetting that LISZT had made and spent immense fortunes, and had left quite as much as he wanted.

"Madame," replied the great *virtuoso*, with that exquisite touch of courteous but satirical humour of which he is a master, "if *you* stood in need of that large fortune, believe me I would go."

We spoke of WAGNER, and I noticed how he had infected the most opposite schools, how even VERDI had drunk deep, many portions of "Aïda" being quite Wagneresque.

"Yes, he is well in the air now; everything breathes him at last."

"And the *Parsifal*?" I said; "is that new drama really coming off?"

"Surely, next year in July, at Bayreuth. We shall have all the world there."

"All the Wagnerites," I said.

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"No, no, all sorts; it is the fashion now; *tous les badauds s'en mélent!*" which might be rendered in elegant American, "Every cockney is just on him."

I understood that the Abbate would retire early, and we took our leave. I can see his noble figure now, dressed in a long black priest's gown; as he rose with us, took a candle and came out into the passage, the light fell flickeringly upon those well-known and majestic features; the thick white hair seemed to crown him, falling straight on either side to his shoulders; he looked like an old-world figure carved by MICHAEL ANGELO, and standing in a niche apart, always the same strange genial striking combination which has captivated society throughout Europe and been the wonder of the musical world for fifty years, always unconsciously scenic, statuesque, and withal superbly human—such will long linger in my memory the Abbate FRANZ LISZT at Rome in 1881.

569. GOOD NIGHT.

THE END.

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